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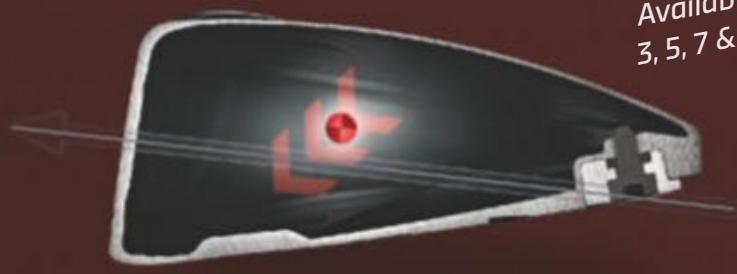
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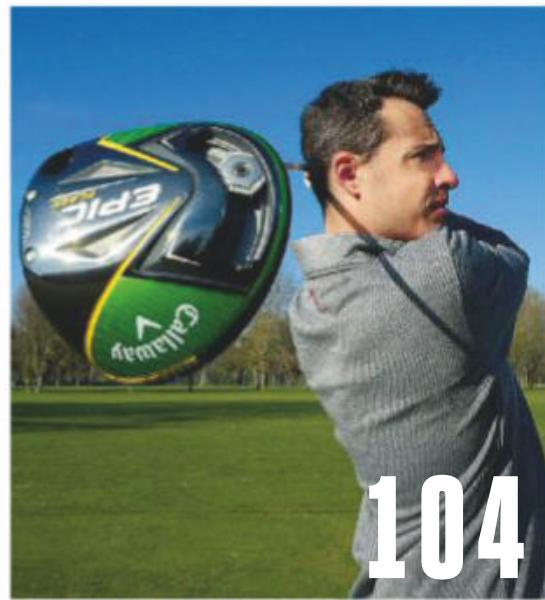
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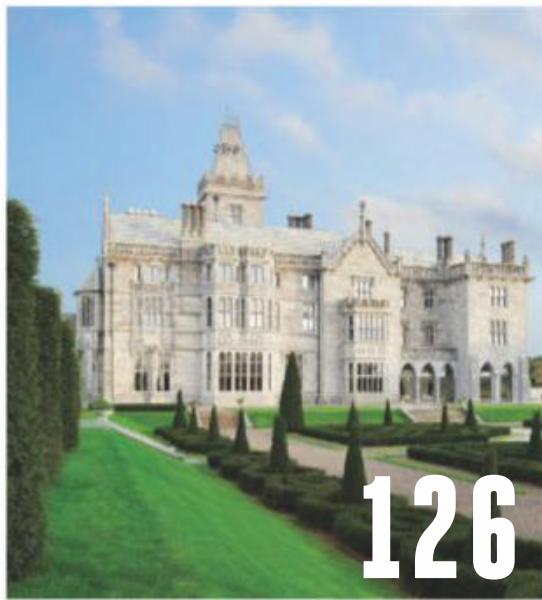
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FROM THE EDITOR

Links courses are simply magical



MICHAEL HARRIS

EDITOR

michael.harris@ti-media.com

THE JOY OF GOLF

Over its 108-year history, *Golf Monthly* has prided itself on bringing you closer to some of the biggest names in the game and introducing you to some new ones that you might not be familiar with, and this issue is no exception. Taking top billing are the second and third best golfers in the world at the time of writing, Justin Rose and Brooks Koepka.

Ticking the less-well-known box are South Korea's Ho-sung Choi - who you may know from his eccentric swing - and young American Kurt Kitayama. We were told he was 'one to watch' at the start of the year and barely a month after we spoke to him in Dubai he won the Oman Open.

Elsewhere, Fergus Bisset has penned a feature that I think is a must-read piece. His magnificent list of the '100 greatest things in golf' is sure to delight any golfer, regardless of how long they have been playing or how many they have ticked off. Three in particular lingered with me...

'Not suffering a blob in Stableford' - perhaps the ultimate mark of a grinding; 'a clean pair of white golf shoes' - if I'm going to play badly, I'll do it looking the part at least; and my favourite, 'a links at dawn or dusk'. The links are golf's magical places, but at either end of the day the true beauty of the ground is revealed. Capricious seaside winds have usually not yet whipped up or are dying down and the solitude combines with the land to reaffirm that this is where the soul of our game lives. I'd love to hear which of the 100 has particular resonance with you.

This issue also marks the final contributions from Lee Westwood and Dan Walker. Both have been an absolute pleasure to work with. Lee has shared so much great insight and it's been wonderful to see him have a genuine resurgence in form during his playing editorship. Dan always hit deadline (even the time I'd failed to inform him of it until two hours before it was due!) and rustled up a series of great columns. We thank them both.

Next issue will see a host of new features and a fresh new look for the magazine. I can promise you there is some great stuff around the corner, but until then there's plenty to enjoy within these pages.

Michael Harris



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Email: golfmonthly@ti-media.com

Website: golf-monthly.co.uk

©TI Media Limited ISSN 0017-1816

Sell-out hotline: 020 7907 7777

Back issues: MAGS-UK

Opening hours: 9.30am - 1.30pm Monday to Friday
mags-uk.com/browse-by-publisher/ti-media.html

Tel: 01795 662976 **Email:** support@mags-uk.com

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SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPT

Golf Monthly Subscriptions: FREEPOST TI Media Limited (if posted in the UK; no further address or stamp needed)
Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at TI Media, 3rd floor, 161 Marsh Wall, London E14 9AP. Air Business Ltd. is acting as our mailing agent. All prices include postage and packaging. US Postmaster: Enquiries and address changes should be sent to: TI Media Ltd, Rockwood House, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH

Enquiries and order hotline: 0330 333 1113

Email: help@magazinesdirect.com

One year's full subscription rates: 1 Year (13 issues) full subscription rates: UK £64.80; Europe & Eire €148.70 (delivery 3-5 days); USA \$191.20 (delivery 5-12 days); Rest of World £132.80 (delivery 5-7 days)

Online subscriptions: golf-monthly.co.uk

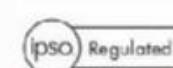
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Printed by Walstead UK Limited

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YOUR VIEW

The pick of the letters and emails to hit the *Golf Monthly* offices this month

Anchors away

What do Webb Simpson, Bryson DeChambeau, Matt Kuchar, Adam Scott and various other tour players have in common? They have all recently used an anchored putting method sanctioned by the game's governing bodies.

When the anchoring ban was introduced, it was intended to prevent players adopting a way of temporarily attaching the putter grip to part of their body. This action was considered to be an illegitimate way of gaining control of the putting stroke. If anchoring to the upper body is unacceptable, surely anchoring against the forearm is as well?

We also have the strange situation where certain players continue to use broomhandle putters. Observers are assured that these are never anchored, while the evidence suggests otherwise.

A simple solution exists which would make future anchoring to any part of the body impossible

– amend the equipment rules to stipulate that the putter must be the shortest club in the bag. Time for The R&A and USGA to act.

Peter Howie, via email

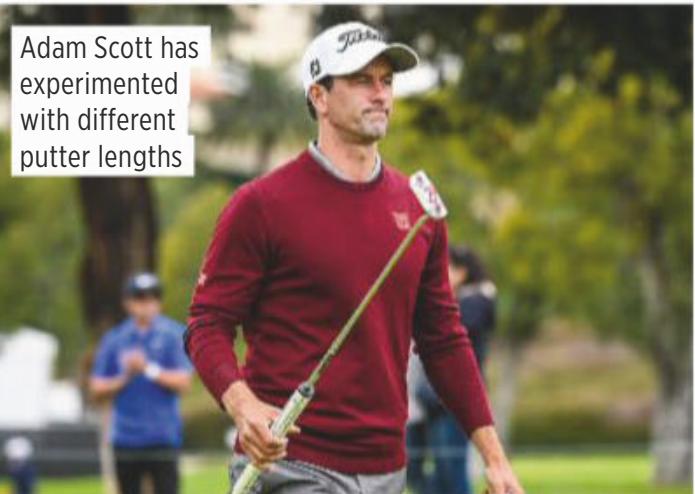
Course mismanagement

The unfortunate situation Rickie Fowler encountered having visited the water at the recent Phoenix Open is not a fault of the Rules of Golf, in my opinion. The course set-up was the problem.

The Penalty Area is there – it must be anticipated that someone might visit it and need to take a drop. So the grass in the likely relief area should be left long enough to ensure that a ball placed on a spot does not succumb to gravity. It wouldn't need to be that much longer to prevent such a situation occurring.

Well done to Fowler for keeping it together, making a great putt and closing out the tournament brilliantly.

Martin Cunningham, via email



Adam Scott has experimented with different putter lengths

For the many, not the few

Many pro players seem to have forgotten that the recent rule changes were for the millions of club golfers around the world as well as them.

Adam Scott's comments on the flag rule totally disregard the fact that the rule has definitely improved the pace of play at club level. I love the fact you can go ahead and putt when a playing partner is walking to a bunker. The pros also seem to be obsessed with how the knee drop

Rickie kept his cool after two separate penalties in Phoenix



**LETTERS**

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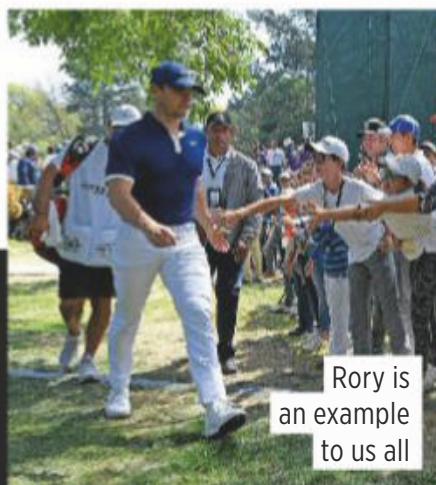
LETTER OF THE MONTH

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Titleist**Model professionals**

As an ex-teacher and dad to a football and golf mad six-year-old, I often reflect on role models and their impact on the young.

Watching my son copy footballers he sees on TV highlights the impact of diving, arguing with referees and other concerning habits. Even more disturbing is the inability of the governing bodies to hold players and managers to account.



Rory is
an example
to us all

Overall, golf's ability to teach the young how to behave around sport and its parallels to life is fantastic.

So let's keep holding our professional sportspeople to account. That way, the next generation will continue to look up to, and model themselves on, the positive behaviour we see so often in the wonderful sport of golf.

Alan Richardson, Somerset



The winner receives a year's supply (six dozen) of the best Titleist golf ball for his or her game

makes them look, rather than its worldwide benefits. At club level we are not as privileged to play on pristine courses week in, week out and the knee drop at least gives a half-decent chance of a good lie.

The pros of course aren't troubled by a massive twig sitting behind their ball in a pristine bunker – again, another example of a great rule change at club level whereby the offending twig can be removed. I applaud the governing bodies.

Steve West, via email

A simple game

At last, new rules of golf! Can we hope for a giant step for golfing kind? Have the custodians of the wonderful game finally had the sense and courage to rein in the relentless march of technology?

Alas, no! What these wise men have decreed is that: (a) the duration of search for a lost ball be cut from five minutes to three minutes; (b) ready golf be the

norm; (c) putting with the flagstick in and unattended will be permitted and (d) a dropped ball may be dropped from knee high! You could not make it up.

Golf is a simple game. It does not require a book of rules. The number of rules could easily be cut to single figures, the two main ones being: (a) no free drops! No matter where the ball goes, you either play it from where it is or take a penalty drop; and (b) if a ball is moved on the green by wind or accidentally, simply replace it.

The recent incident with Rory McIlroy and Dustin Johnson illustrated perfectly the stupidity of the rules. Who can justify one player being disadvantaged while the other's lie is so improved he can drop clear of the offending tree?

Hugo Finlay, Portrush

Open to all

I read with sadness and anger Richard Barber's letter last month

regarding the lack of inclusivity at the club he has joined. Within every sport you will always have groups of friends or cliques, for want of a better word. However, every person in that clique also has the ability to welcome others. Sadly, people sometimes just can't see outside of their own little comfort zone.

At my club we have a process to welcome all new members. Management passes details on and contact is duly made. If the person is new to golf, they are assigned a mentor to assist with all issues of learning the game. To assist beginners, higher handicaps and the less physically able, we run fun alternatives to monthly medals and have also added a further division in prize allocations.

Not all clubs are the same, and there are people out there making an effort and attempting to keep the game that we love (most of the time!) as popular as ever.

Adele Young, via email

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The Game



FRANCESCO MOLINARI

A Palmer-Esque Finish

Francesco Molinari surged through the field on Sunday at Bay Hill to record a third PGA Tour victory since July 2018 at the Arnold Palmer Invitational. The Italian produced golf of the highest standard and had the "best putting round of his career" as he negotiated the final 18 holes without dropping a shot - much like his Sunday performance at Carnoustie. Another assault on the Majors looks likely for Molinari.





BRILLIANCE AT BAY HILL

64

Molinari shot a
bogey-free 64 in
the final round

3

PGA Tour
wins in his last
12 starts

7

The Italian's
new world
ranking

55

PGA Tour
top-25 finishes
in 125 starts

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PGA Tour earnings since
the start of 2018



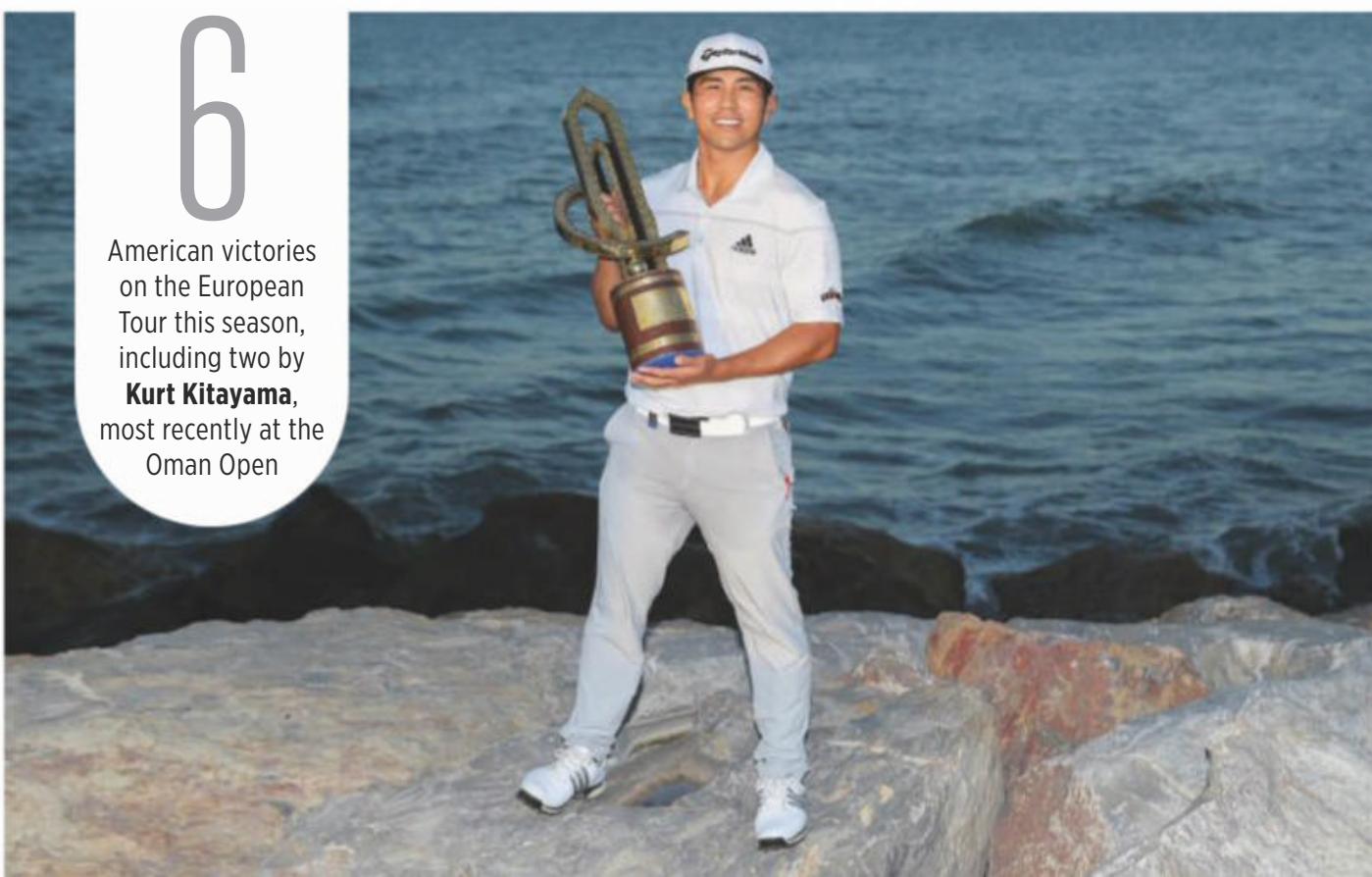
-17

Nelly Korda's
winning score
at the ISPS
Handa Women's
Australian Open



3

Margin of victory
for **Martin Trainer**
at the Puerto Rico
Open – his first
PGA Tour victory



6

American victories
on the European
Tour this season,
including two by
Kurt Kitayama,
most recently at the
Oman Open

**15**

Keith Mitchell
holed a 15-footer
on the 72nd green
to win his first PGA
Tour event at the
Honda Classic

**20**

Dustin Johnson
won his 20th PGA
Tour title and 6th
WGC at the Mexico
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FRANCESCO MOLINARI

You have three wins in your last 12 PGA Tour starts. What does that say about where you are physically and mentally?

It was my first week as a Callaway player, so I'm happy to see that the switch I made wasn't as crazy as some people thought. I know the clubs are good for me. It's crazy to get it done at Arnie's place, knowing that my wife and my kids were watching it back home. It's just a special, special one. I tried to be aggressive from the start and it was nice to see quite a lot of putts dropping. I think it was the best putting round ever in my career.

Did you think you could catch Rory?

I didn't particularly think about Rory, I was thinking about him and the other guys at the top of the leaderboard. I thought there was a chance, yes, because playing in the third to last group on the Saturday I saw how difficult the course was over the last few holes. So I thought, go out and try to make a few birdies and keep pushing.

How have you managed to put together so many significant runs of bogey-free golf?

It's never easy, but I think what makes the difference is my mental approach is a lot

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► **Wedges:** Callaway Mack Daddy 4, 50°, 56° and 60°

► **Putter:** Odyssey Toulon Design Madison Stroke Lab

► **Ball:** Callaway Chrome Soft X 'diamond' prototype

The Open Champion produced a bogey-free 64 to capture the Arnold Palmer Invitational



MOLINARI BY THE NUMBERS

43

He holed a 43ft putt on the last to win by two

4

Since the start of the 2016/17 season, Molinari has had four final-round 64s

better than three or four years ago. I practise at home to do this sort of stuff in tournaments and it's not happened overnight, it's taken a lot of time. Now I'm just more prepared to deal with whatever comes my way and I think that's why when I get into contention you see a few bogey-free rounds.

You had a long time to wait to find out if you'd won. What did you do?

I just went to the locker room and watched the golf, to be honest. I find it a lot more nerve-racking sitting there than being out there playing. It's easier to keep some sort of control when you're hitting the shots. When it's not up to you it's not a very nice feeling. I said this after I won The Open Championship last year, I didn't enjoy that half an hour at all and I didn't enjoy it this time watching the other guys. But when you get it done, then at the end it's a great feeling.

You alluded to your family watching and also that it's Arnold Palmer's tournament.

What does it mean to you to have this on your CV?

Incredible. It's high up there with the best wins I've had. Arnie was a special player, but most of all a special person and he really did a lot for the game. For someone like me coming from Italy, him and Jack were up there as gods, so to win this one, it's really truly special.

Given Arnie's style of play, being an aggressive player, is it fitting that Rory last year and you this year have won the tournament the way you have?

Yeah, I think so. I hope so. It's always a pleasure for us to come back to his place. It was obviously even better when he was around, but even now you can feel his presence and, yeah, hopefully he saw Rory last year and he saw me this year and he's proud of what we did out there.

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Fergus Bisset says

NO

In today's competitive world, golf clubs must be run more like businesses if they are to survive and move forwards. But this doesn't mean they should be run like businesses that push ethical boundaries.

Insurance companies and other subscription services that draw in new business with discounted first-year offers, while charging loyal customers higher rates, have rightly come under scrutiny in recent years. It's a business technique that should be questioned rather than admired and replicated. Members' golf clubs are democratic organisations where all should contribute an equitable share to the facility's upkeep and all should receive equitable opportunity to benefit from that facility.

By offering new joiners a discount on their first year of membership, a club will damage not only its integrity but also the relationships between members and between members and their club. How aggrieved will a member of 30 years feel when they discover a new member is paying 20% less for their subscription?

The practice of offering discounts to new joiners also discourages golfers from staying loyal to a club. It's standard to move around when it comes to car insurance or broadband provision, taking advantage of deals offered to new customers. Do golf clubs really want to get into a similar sort of cut-throat rotation where members shift allegiance on an annual basis? It would mean clubs having far less certainty on membership numbers, leading to insecurity over budget setting and forward planning.

To succeed, golf clubs, like any business, must offer a great product and service at a competitive price. To deliver excellent service to all members, that competitive basic price should be consistent for all, whether new or old.

“Members’ golf clubs are democratic organisations where all should contribute an equitable share”

DEBATE SHOULD CLUBS OFFER A DISCOUNT ON THE FIRST YEAR OF MEMBERSHIP?

Two *Golf Monthly* regulars come down on different sides of the fence



What's your view?

Email golfmonthly@ti-media.com



Jeremy Ellwood says

YES

It may not be the ideal solution, but in a free market, when supply and demand gets out of balance to the extent that it has in golf, anything goes in the quest to survive.

Times have changed and loyalty in many areas is not what it once was. Want to know the perfect way to get the best supermarket discount vouchers? Don't shop there for a few weeks and wait for the incentives to start rolling into the Inbox. Week in, week out, customers often won't be getting the same deals.

We have to be realistic in this time of oversupply. Many golf clubs have pared green fee rates down to within an inch of their lives to attract customers, so it's understandable that some are applying similar principles to membership fees.

As an example, I play a lot of golf with my work, and, for me, weekend club golf just isn't a priority right now. I simply can't justify a south-east England membership fee for the amount I'm likely to play – typically ten to 12 times the last few years, which makes it around £100 a round for courses where you can probably get a green fee for £30 if you play at the right times.

Faced with this dilemma, a small local club did entice me in a few years ago with a half-price first year, three-quarter-price second year offer, which just about made it viable. After two years, I was just beginning to integrate a little even on my limited appearances, so I did a third year at full rate even though I suspected it would not be viable. That club got three years of revenue out of me, none of which it would have had if the first year had not been discounted.

“Times have changed and loyalty in many areas is not what it once was. We have to be realistic”



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NEW GEAR

LAUNCH
OF THE
MONTH

GALVIN GREEN 2019 APPAREL

Galvin Green has launched its most advanced clothing collection to date for the start of the 2019 season, which comprises a total of 368 garments along with matching accessories.

Launching alongside the Part 1 Collection is the new Ashton Gore-Tex Shakedry jacket, a stand-alone garment that is the first streamlined, superlight waterproof jacket of its kind in golf. It's also the lightest rain jacket ever made by Galvin Green – weighing just 174 grams – thanks to the unrivalled Gore-Tex membrane being placed on the outside. This enables water to bead off the surface, creating minimal chilling effect and a much faster dry-off time. It also makes it totally windproof and highly breathable, eliminates friction during the golf swing and takes up minimal space inside the golf bag when folded down for storage.

Headlining the main collection is the Archie full-zip waterproof jacket, which forms part of the

Ashton Shakedry –
RRP £280



Milton polo –
RRP £79.95

Doug Insula –
RRP £189.95



Lincoln Interface-1 –
RRP £189.95

Carbon Series in black, grey and silver colourways. It features the smooth C-Knit 'slide and glide' backer and incorporates Gore-Tex Superstretch inserts in key areas, as well as durable Vectran technology on the shoulders for those who carry their clubs.

The Carbon Series also features the Lloyd full-zip jacket and half-zip Lancelot in the flexible Interface-1 hybrid shell layer, plus the Dave full-zip Insula jacket offering added warmth. Also included are the Matt and Mylo short-sleeve shirts in the moisture-wicking Ventil8 Plus fabric.

A Shell Layer newcomer is the ultra-lightweight Andres full-zip jacket (RRP £279.95) in Gore-Tex Paclite stretch fabric for minimal swing restriction.

As many as nine garments feature in the versatile Interface-1 hybrid range that Galvin Green believes can be worn for 95 out of 100 rounds. Golfers can even try

out the half-zip Lincoln jacket for free at selected UK locations.

The warm Insula range features the new Doug full-zip jacket, sporting a padded front and two handy pockets in the Antarctica colourway.

New Cool Layer short-sleeve shirts in the Ventil8 Plus fabric include the sporty Myles, incorporating a two-tone honeycomb design, and the Milton – a multi-fabric shirt in a dual-block pattern available in five different colourways.

The new collection is on sale now, with the Shakedry jacket available in limited quantities from April 1 from selected stockists.

GM SAYS

Once again Galvin Green's clothing range is as comprehensive as it is impressive, packed full of garments that reliably perform in all weather conditions, justifying the premium price point.





UNDER ARMOUR HOVR DRIVE SHOE

Hovr is a soft, light and responsive cushioning material said to enhance both walking comfort and energy return during the swing. RST 2.0 cleats on the outsole improve grip and stability.



UNDER ARMOUR SHOWDOWN SL SHOE

UA's Rotational Resistance Traction lets you swing with control, while the spikeless sole provides off-course versatility. It's waterproof and has a cork footbed that draws moisture away from the foot.



GOLF PRIDE TOUR SNSR CONTOUR PRO PUTTER GRIP

Comes in two sizes and has rounded edges and a pistol flare back to fit more naturally in the hands. A wide, paddle front promotes consistent hand placement, while the soft rubber aids feel.



MOTOCADDY PRO-SERIES

It is now 20 per cent lighter and has nine spacious pockets, as well as easy-carry handles. Comes in three colours.



POWAKADDY DRI-EDITION

A special coating provides waterproof protection, while a three-handle top makes it easier to move. Comes in six colours.



BIG MAX AQUA V-4

Has nine waterproof pockets and a V-Lock organiser top with four 'twist and lock' slots to keep woods in place. Comes in six colours.



MOTOCADDY S1 ELECTRIC TROLLEY

Upgrades for 2019 include a high-resolution LCD colour screen with nine speeds. It also boasts a very light lithium battery, a Quikfold mechanism for easy assembly and the trusty Easilock base.



MOTOCADDY S7 REMOTE ELECTRIC TROLLEY

Directed by a compact handset with dual pressure buttons for improved control, the new S7 Remote also includes Automatic Downhill Control that maintains a constant speed down slopes.



MOTOCADDY Z1 PUSH TROLLEY

This entry-level model boasts a two-step folding system, a parking brake and an easy-push handle adjustable to three heights. There's also a large accessory storage area. Comes in two colours.



BIG MAX TI ONE PUSH TROLLEY

The TI One features a height-adjustable handle and deluxe organiser panel with integrated bottle holder and storage net. It can also hold a range of accessories. Comes with a five-year warranty.



GARMIN APPROACH G80

Combines GPS and launch-monitor capabilities via an integrated radar that allows you to analyse shots on the range and view distances on full-colour hole maps. Touch Targeting lets you move the pin or plot your landing point.



FORESIGHT SPORTS GCHAWK

Designed for indoor simulators and entertainment driving ranges, GCHawk is ceiling-mounted so it can be used by left- and right-handed golfers to seamlessly capture shots with every club.



BEST 2019 CART BAGS

MOTOCADDY PRO-SERIES

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Has nine waterproof pockets and a V-Lock organiser top with four 'twist and lock' slots to keep woods in place. Comes in six colours.



MIZUNO PRO

Mizuno's premium cart bag features magnetic closure, a side cooler and fleece-lined valuables pockets, as well as sturdy zips.

IN DETAIL POWAKADDY COMPACT C2i GPS ELECTRIC TROLLEY

£699.99

Previously, golfers had to choose between a trolley that folded down small or a larger option with GPS capability built in. But with the PowaKaddy Compact C2i GPS, they can now have both all in one.

It joins the popular Freeway range in PowaKaddy's comprehensive line-up as arguably its most cutting-edge model of all, featuring a fully integrated GPS system. When folded down, it has the smallest volume of any electric trolley on the market.

The handle is pre-loaded with over 38,000 courses worldwide, meaning there's no need for any external GPS device. The course is automatically detected and the 2.8" colour display shows front, middle and back yardages, battery level, current time, hole number and its par, total distance travelled and the distance to reach hazards with the click of a button.

Many features of the previous Compact C2i carry over, like the ball and tee holders on the console, the height-adjustable handle and the simple two-step folding mechanism. But new to the GPS version is a Bluetooth connection to the PowaKaddy app that allows for quicker, more seamless golf course updates.

No stone has been left unturned when it comes to the

engineering of the Compact C2i GPS. A polymer low-profile chassis is sturdy yet lightweight, creating a stable, smooth and easy ride. The Plug 'n' Play lithium battery is the thinnest on the market and removes the need for any wires or connectors when slotting it into the battery tray. It also features non-corrosive tempered glass bearings at the front wheel, said to last up to five

The integrated GPS requires no phone signal or external devices



WANT TO
SEE MORE?



To watch our review of the Compact C2i GPS trolley, visit golf-monthly.co.uk/reviews

times longer than regular bearings and offer a smoother movement. You won't distract your playing partners, either, as the drive systems have been awarded the Quiet Mark thanks to a design that reduces sound to near-silence when in motion.

PowaKaddy trolleys in recent years have proven to be reliable and easy to use, and this one might just be the best yet.



"GIVEN THE VARIETY OF FEATURES AND HOW EASY IT IS TO USE, THE VALUE FOR MONEY HERE IS EXCEPTIONAL"

Joel Tadman, GM technical editor

THE INSIDE LINE



PowaKaddy's David Catford tells us more about the brand's latest powered trolley...

1 What are the benefits of having the GPS built in over an external device?

Cost is a major factor. For just £100 more than our original Compact C2i, it features a state-of-the-art GPS without the added hassle of an external piece of kit. On top of this, the trolley's in-built GPS is easy to use, and there are no worries about forgetting to charge your device – the GPS system is powered by the lithium battery.

2 What feature besides the GPS are you most proud of here?

The C2i GPS boasts all the tech that the modern-day golfer looks for in an electric trolley, with the added bonus that it is easy to transport and fits into the smallest of car boots. Add the trolley's simple two-fold mechanism – which makes it easy to quickly assemble – and we are confident we have created a top-class product.

3 What are the benefits of a compact-folding electric trolley?

Space can often be at a premium for golfers and that's why we have produced an ultra-compact trolley that is easy to store and transport. We have tested the trolley in some of the smallest car boots on the market and have ensured that it fits in neatly and with the minimum of fuss.



ON THE TEE AL MOUJ



GF: £60-£120 **W:** almoujgolf.com **Stats:** par 72, 6,418 yards



B

ursting to more than 7,300 yards from the championship tees, but with plenty of options for all, the spectacular Greg Norman design at Al Mouj – The Wave – has come a long way in its seven years.

Perfectly located between the airport and the Gulf of Oman, it hosted a Challenge Tour event each year until 2017, the last three of which were the season-closing Grand Final. Last year, it stepped up a level and it is now home to the European Tour and the Oman

Open. In an area where rainfall is scarce, the club can be proud to have won this year's IAGTO Sustainability Award.

The course itself enjoys a dreamy setting right alongside the Indian Ocean, with inspirational views out to sea and inland to the Hajjar mountains. The layout is an exciting mix of links and desert with water regularly in play, and each nine climaxes with an extremely strong par 4. Perhaps the most photogenic hole is the short 2nd, which plays directly towards the ocean to an infinity green.

IN THE AREA? WHY NOT PLAY THESE...



Ras Al Hamra

GF: £45-£70

W: rasalhamragolfclub.com



Muscat Hills

GF: £45-£120

W: muscathillsgolf.com



WHAT'S IN THE BAG? JUSTIN ROSE

The World No.2 has made some big changes to his clubs for 2019



Driver

Honma TWorld747 460, 9.5°, Honma Vizard FD-7X shaft.



Fairway woods

TaylorMade M6, 15° and 19°, Mitsubishi Chemical Tensei Orange CK Series 80TX shafts.



Utility irons

Honma TWorld-U 2- and 3-iron, KBS Tour C-Taper 125 S+ shafts.



Irons

Honma TWorld747 Rose Proto (4- to 9-iron), KBS Tour C-Taper 125 S+ shafts.



Putter

Axis 1 Rose Prototype, Lamkin Flat Cat grip.



Wedges

Honma Rose Proto Raw, 48°, 52° and 56°, Titleist Vokey Wedge Works, 60° K-Grind, KBS Hi-Rev 2.0 135X shafts.



Ball

2019 TaylorMade TP5.



Who's the fairest?

Jordan Spieth was seen using the new PuttOut Mirror With Gate training aid, which features magnetic guides, during practice at the WGC-Mexico to try and transform his fortunes on the greens.



Rory's new kicks

Rory McIlroy has been sporting a new pair of Nike Air Zoom Victory Tour shoes that he helped design, featuring React foam.



Bubba's paint job

Bubba Watson has been showing off the custom pink paint job on the crown of his new Ping G410 Plus driver. You'll certainly know who it belongs to should you find it!



NEWS ROUND-UP

The top gear stories on tour, plus insight into some of the more interesting clubs that have helped players cross the finishing line

Dustin Johnson won the WGC-Mexico with a 10.5° TaylorMade M5 driver

JB Holmes won at Riviera with Srixon Z 785 irons and the Z-Star XV ball

Adam Scott used a L.A.B. Golf Directed Force 2.1 putter at the Honda

Francesco Molinari won at Bay Hill having just signed with Callaway

Tommy Fleetwood added a Srixon Z 785 4-iron to his bag at the Arnold Palmer

Matt Fitzpatrick is now using a Bettinardi BB1F Tour Proto putter

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Wayne Riley



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

I hate to harp on about slow play, but I've found the last few weeks infuriating. It's time to start consistently penalising offenders and docking shots is the only way to go about it

We've all been speaking about slow play for way too long and everyone's sick of the topic, but we need to continue to stress the point that change is essential. I can't for the life of me understand why nothing is being done about it; I genuinely can't see why penalties aren't being given out regularly. Am I missing something? It reduces excitement and it's terrible from a PR standpoint. The only thing I can think of is tours not wanting to upset players, but they are playing for \$7m each week so they are doing okay! Something mysterious is going on and I wish I knew what it was.

I was at the Genesis Open in February and how long JB Holmes was taking was unbelievable. We were all just standing there saying "What the hell is going on here?" His playing partners, who were trying to win a big golf tournament, were looking at each other wondering how he was getting away with it.

And then you've got Bryson DeChambeau. On the 15th green at the Dubai Desert Classic the month before, he took a minute and 47 seconds to putt. How do I know? Because I stood there and timed it. What he was doing I just don't know. He was pacing all around the green and it was taking forever. It was all about him. What about the players he was competing against - they were trying to win the tournament as well!

I don't know what's going on. Are the officials being handcuffed? There's no point fining these guys - it's just a waste

of time. We must start to penalise them a shot. You can't fine them, because they don't care about the money, but you can penalise them. That will hurt them big time. What's so strange is there is precedent for docking shots - it just so happens that one of the very few people to suffer that fate was a 14-year-old making his debut at The Masters in 2013!

I was out on Sunday with Matt Fitzpatrick and Rory McIlroy at the Arnold Palmer Invitational and they waited on every tee because they played at the right pace. If they were on their own on the golf course, they would have been around in three hours and 20 minutes. But no, they were waiting every shot. Is that fair? It's not. Everyone's sick of talking about it, but something seriously needs to be done.

Our kids are watching this, and they probably think plum-bobbing and doing all the DeChambeau stuff is the right way to go about their business. It's teaching children the wrong thing. In the past, if your group was a slow one you would let the next group through - what ever happened to that? It's all starting to get a bit ridiculous. We're all just shaking our heads.

To take a minute and a half, which is double the guide time, is outrageous. Slow players stand there checking the yardage chart books and the green books. They are an issue, too. So is people constantly and ever so slightly adjusting the line of their ball on the greens. Are we taking away from the game as it was meant to be played? Are we causing slow play by having green

books? People will continue to come up with things that will help the player unless we do something about it.

Here's an idea, with my tongue slightly in my cheek. What's wrong, in professional golf, with yellow and red cards? Can you imagine a rules official walking out of his buggy with a big yellow or red card? Imagine the galleries, they'd go "Ooooh" and "Aaah" and "You're slow mate, get a move on!" This way slow players would be named and shamed and, you never know, it might encourage them to play faster. I also think we're now at a point where we should do away with warnings and go straight in with shot penalties. Chance would be a fine thing.

Slow play aside, it's been a good few weeks of action. DJ was unbelievable in Mexico and drove it phenomenally well. The form of McIlroy is pleasing, too. I know he's struggled of late in the final group on a Sunday, but I think he's just trying a bit too hard. He's driving the ball like a missile and from what I can see his wedge game is improving - it looks like he's shallowed things out a touch and he's knocking shots down and holding them up. His putting is sensational right now, no doubt helped by the work he's doing with Brad Faxon. Mark my words, the wins are coming. Who knows, by the time you read this, we might know how Rory looks in a Green Jacket.

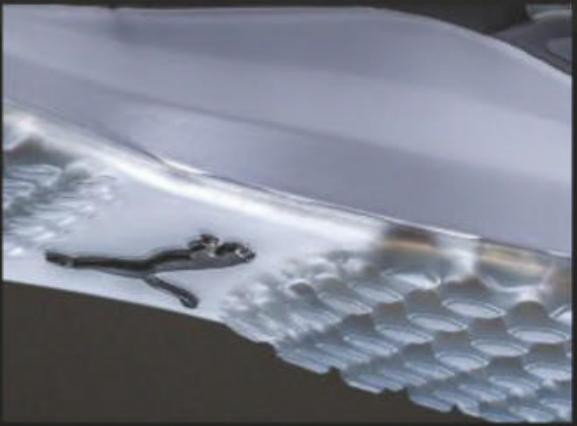
■ Wayne Riley is a former member of the European Tour and two-time winner who is part of the Sky Sports Golf Team. He writes exclusively for *Golf Monthly*

"I think we're now at a point where we should do away with warnings and go straight in with shot penalties. Chance would be a fine thing"

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Lee Westwood



THE PICK OF THE BUNCH

The new rules have been a big talking point of late, and while they need to be discussed, I'm also keen to talk about some of the best players I've seen and competed against in my career

We're now into the meat of the season, but, as I've said before, you can find yourself playing relatively few tournaments in the first few months of the year if you're not in the world's top 50. Still, it gives you a good chance to rest up and prepare yourself for the busy stretches ahead.

At the time of writing this, I've just played the four events in 2019 – the three Desert Swing tournaments and the WGC-Mexico Championship. I've played fairly well at times and shot some low rounds, with a couple of top-20 finishes in there. I just haven't really strung four rounds together, but I find you need a run of events to really find some rhythm.

Obviously there have been some great performances and exciting tournaments so far this year, but the rules have received a lot of attention. Some of the new rules are good, but some of them feel a bit strange and I'd question whether they were necessary. I understand putting with the flag in is helpful in the amateur game and probably makes things quicker, but does it look good on TV? Or do we just need to get used to it? I'm not sure. Dropping from knee height also looks odd, but then again, I suppose if knee height was the original rule and we changed to shoulder height, that'd feel weird too.

I actually dropped from shoulder height in Abu Dhabi, but fortunately my caddie reminded me and I was able to drop again from knee height. Rickie Fowler wasn't so fortunate when he was

penalised at the Honda Classic. I'd say in general the players have been fairly unenthused about the changes, and some of the recent penalties haven't helped matters – the various caddies 'lining up' players, for example. It feels like it's been one stupid thing after another and it's not a good look for the game. In my mind the lining-up rule just isn't clear enough. You would think common sense would prevail, but that doesn't seem to have been the case.

I'm not sure the new rules have improved things that much. The one they should have implemented and didn't was to get rid of the green reading books altogether. That would have been great. But what they did instead was introduce restrictions on what can be displayed, which has confused things.

But anyway, I don't want to harp on about rules too much – hopefully things will sort themselves out. I'm often asked about the best players I've seen or shared the fairways with over the course of my career, so I thought it'd be good to go into that here.

Greg Norman is definitely the best driver of a golf ball I've seen. He was brilliant at it in the era before technology equalised everybody. Now, I believe that great drivers' advantages have been taken away from them somewhat. I'd consider myself to be a very good driver of the ball and have been throughout my career. Do I have as big an advantage now as I did in the '90s? Probably not.

Ian Woosnam would get my vote for best iron player, and it'd be between Phil Mickelson and Bernhard Langer for short

game. I've mentioned Phil for obvious reasons, but Bernhard was (and still is!) so good at scoring when he wasn't playing well. You don't win The Masters twice unless you have a great short game.

Tiger Woods is the best putter I've ever seen, with reference to his heyday. He just didn't miss from inside ten feet when he was in contention. There was a ridiculous stat one year at Firestone, where he was something like 45 of 45 from inside 12 feet. I don't need to tell you how absurd that is. There was certainly an intimidation factor when Tiger's name appeared on a leaderboard, but I always liked playing with him – he just carries such a great atmosphere around the golf course.

Others deserve mentions – Lee Trevino for his shot-making and Jack Nicklaus for his mental strength and sheer desire to win. His Major record speaks to that. I can't see anyone getting to 18, but I think the most likely of the current crop to reach double figures is Brooks Koepka. He's got all the tools and I love his attitude. I still think Rory comes out on top if everyone brings their best golf to a certain event, though.

This month's column is sadly my last as playing editor. I've enjoyed writing it and sharing my thoughts with you – I hope you've found it interesting. All the best with your own golf and thanks for all the support over the years.

■ Lee is sponsored by Audemars Piguet, Bioflow, Close House, Druh Belts, Peter Millar, ISPS Handa, Nike, Ping, Titleist, UPS and Your Golf Travel

“Greg Norman is definitely the best driver of a golf ball I've seen. He was brilliant at it in the era before technology equalised everybody”



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4100

Greatest Things

Illustration: Jamie Latchford Photography: Getty Images

Fergus Bisset talks through the 100 things he loves most about the game of golf, from the links at dawn to a freshly opened pack of tees

Golf is undoubtedly challenging and yes, at times, it can be incredibly frustrating. But it's also hugely rewarding and there are a plethora of reasons to love our great game. So many elements of the sport give pleasure and even the smallest thing can fill the golfer with pure enjoyment.

The reasons why each of us cherishes golf are, of course, highly personal, and this list merely demonstrates the 100 greatest things about it in my eyes.

I've tried to cover as many facets of the sport as possible, from playing to watching and from the build-up to the aftermath. Hopefully most of the choices will strike a chord and provide a little reminder why you became (and hopefully remain) so smitten with this, the paragon of all sports. So, in no particular order...

Driving from the 1st tee at St Andrews

The Old Course at St Andrews is like Mecca for any golf lover. The feeling of standing on the hallowed turf in front of The R&A clubhouse is hard to beat. As you spank one down towards the Swilken Bridge, you'll think "This is it!"

Buying a new driver

It's big, it's shiny and it's going to give you an extra 20 yards. There's no piece of equipment that holds more expectation or potential than a new driver.

A well-stocked pro shop

The words sweet, shop and child spring to mind. Rows of shiny

In Golf



►

100 Greatest Things In Golf

irons, displays featuring the latest drivers, a wall of gleaming shoes, rack upon rack of hats, tees, towels and endless packets of perfectly stacked golf balls. The very thought will have golf lovers salivating.

Taking a day off work to play golf

A bad day on the golf course surely tops any day spent in the office. So, escaping from work in the middle of the week for a day's golf is one of the finest treats golfers can grant themselves. Whether you're knocking the flags out or just enjoying the walk, you'll spend the entire day feeling wonderfully smug.

A boys' golf trip

The pinnacle of any golfer's year is the annual trip away with the boys. For a few days, you can forget the trials and tribulations of normal life. For a little while, nothing matters but playing golf and enjoying time with friends. It gives a brief glimpse of the incredible life of a touring professional – just substitute blobs for birdies and curry and lager for physio treatments and salads.

Winning a tournament and picking up a trophy

It's true that at a club level, golf should be about enjoyment. But even the most



An exciting sight: a well-stocked pro shop

uncompetitive among us would struggle to deny that it's more enjoyable when you win. There's nothing quite like the feeling of completing an excellent round, handing in your card and finding nobody has managed better on the day. Next time you attend a prize-giving, take a look at those heading up to collect a trophy. They will be unable to conceal a proud smile.

Beating your closest 'golfing rival'

Everyone has a golfing nemesis – someone you just really want to beat. It

could be a friend or a club adversary who gets your back up. It's satisfying to beat your rival when you're playing well but, perhaps, even more enjoyable to grind out a victory when you're both struggling. Although your handicap has gone up, you still have bragging rights. What? It's not petty, or childish.

Playing golf with your father or mother

There are few sports that span the generations like golf. Having a knock with your old man or dear old mum is a great chance to bond, and to get one over on them.

Playing golf with your daughter or son

As previous.

Battling the elements and winning

Brits love a good triumph over adversity. The ever-changing weather across our isles means regular players must frequently battle the wind, rain and cold. Returning a good score when the conditions are against you is an indication not only of playing prowess but also of mental fortitude and physical resilience. It's one of the most impressive things a club golfer can achieve.

Tapping in for birdie

The world seems a better place when you're nudging the ball home to record a red figure.

Finding your ball when you've on the verge of giving up hope

All golfers will know that mixed feeling of hope and



Playing golf with family is special

dread as you walk towards the patch of rough you think your ball came down in. The hope subsides and the dread takes over as the search intensifies. Full-blown panic has almost set in when, after two minutes and 45 seconds, you finally locate your ball. The relief is immense.

Taking a day off and watching an entire day's coverage of The Open

For some, watching golf on the television will never beat playing, no matter what event is on. But, for the armchair golf fan, there's nothing quite like an entire day's coverage from the year's most exciting Major. Before relaxing, be sure to have at least one club and a couple of balls to hand for regular carpet chipping and putting.

Attending a Ryder Cup and Europe reigning supreme

The Ryder Cup is unquestionably the most exciting spectator event in golf and those lucky enough to see one live will enjoy a viewing experience unlike anything else in our sport. There's an amazing sense of camaraderie among the fans as they relay information about



Few things bring greater joy than a tap-in birdie

Visiting the British Golf Museum

Those interested in golf's long and distinguished history will be fascinated by the British Golf Museum in St Andrews. There's a wealth of information on the sport, from its origins up to the modern game



how matches are going and they share the sense of anticipation and nervousness. You'll feel all this no matter which side triumphs, but if it's Europe, you also get to join in the epic celebrations.

Meeting up with old friends for a game

Golf is a highly sociable sport and there's no better way to catch up with old buddies than by spending four hours with them around a golf course. Just as long as they don't beat you.

Discovering 'the secret' to your game

Finding this is like chasing the dragon. You'll frequently think you have it and the blissful moments that follow are hugely enjoyable. Unfortunately you then have to suffer the inevitable comedown.

A post-round pint

Your round is complete and you can do no more, but some of your friends are still out there battling. As you sip on your ice-cold beer, you look down the 18th to see one of them find the greenside bunker... shame.

A drive that comes out of the screws

A drive that comes belting out of the sweetspot and soars straight and long down the fairway gives, arguably, the

greatest satisfaction in golf. For a short moment you are a king among men.

Holing a putt on the 18th green to save your handicap

It's one of those rounds when things haven't gone your way, but you've dug deep to have a chance of making the buffer. You stand over a 10ft putt on the final hole that will determine your mood for the rest of the day. As it rolls into the cup, it feels like you've won The Open.

A new sleeve of balls, nicely marked up

These little white missiles, each now with a smiley face, have such potential. They could go on to produce a hole-in-one or a course record... or they could all end up in the woods.

A hole-in-one

Golfing perfection - you simply can't do better than this on a single hole. It's something every golfer wants to achieve at least once by the end of their playing career.

Securing the winning point in a team event

Golf is predominantly an

individual sport, but from club level to the Ryder Cup, there are team events to get involved in. Winning a match in one of these is fantastic, but if it's crucial for your team success as well, the resulting back-slapping is greatly increased. See Jamie Donaldson at Gleneagles.

Beating someone who has a much lower handicap

Punching above your weight and scoring a knockout; to beat someone with a far lower handicap in a gross competition is a massive confidence booster.

Producing the required shot - a fade, draw, punch etc...

You see what is demanded of you and you know only a particular type of shot will deliver the goods. You produce it and then enjoy a little internal celebration.

Driving a par 4

Few things will give you more kudos in the clubhouse than driving a par 4. Long-time members will stop you to ask incredulously, "Is it true you knocked it on the 5th?" "Yes it is. I am very good."



100 Greatest Things In Golf

The tented village at The Open

Much like the well-stocked pro shop, the tented village is heaven for materialistic golfers. They can peruse everything from books and paintings to clothing and holiday destinations.

Beating your handicap and getting cut

Every amateur should be aiming to reduce his or her handicap. Nothing gives personal satisfaction like seeing a lower number beside your name on the noticeboard.

Holing a monster putt or chipping in

It just feels like the golfing gods have smiled on you. It's a welcome bonus and could make all the difference to your card.

Being at The Open to see the winning putt holed

The atmosphere is electric as throngs of spectators encircle the final green to watch the climax of golf's greatest event.

A new pack of white wooden tees

Cut golf open and, at its very core, you'll find a fresh packet of white wooden tees.

The perfectly executed chip

The tricky chip strikes fear into the hearts of many amateurs. When you pull one off as planned, you briefly feel like you may just be able to play this game.

Pristine new grips on clean irons

The firm yet tacky feel of a brand-new grip inspires huge confidence. Couple that with a gleaming blade and you feel unbeatable on the fairways.



The white wooden tee:
a golfing staple



The Open at St Andrews

The greatest tournament in golf at the Home of Golf – no more needs to be said.

Heading to the practice ground with a bag full of balls and a plan

Displaying the unerring optimism of the British amateur, you walk to the range certain that, in an hour's time, you'll be a better golfer.

Approaching a blind green to see your ball on the dance floor

When you've struck a shot towards the target over a blind summit, the feeling of elation when you crest the hill to see your ball sitting proudly on the green is like reaching the summit of Everest.

Bacon rolls and coffee before a round

Like the ringing of a bell made Pavlov's dogs salivate, the taste of bacon and coffee causes golfers to unconsciously make a Vardon grip.

Having a game booked for the weekend

When your working week reaches a nadir sometime around 10am on

The Open: pro golf at its finest



Wednesday, the knowledge you'll be hitting the links on Saturday might just stop you handing in your notice.

Your first game of the season

You've found the clubs under the stairs, dusted off the cobwebs and a new golfing year is underway. Could this be the season you finally crack it?

The first game of the year played in short sleeves

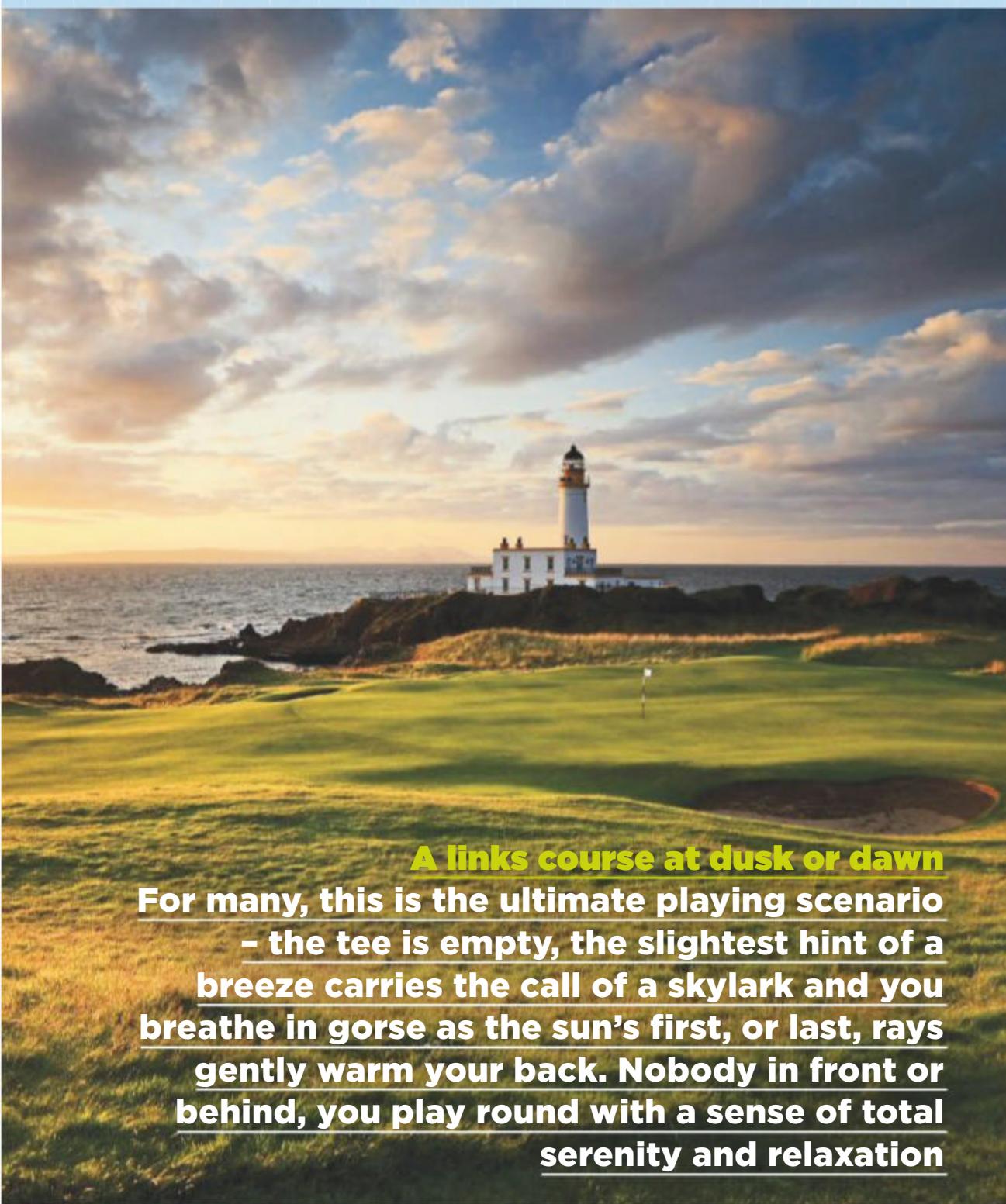
For those who've battled on through the winter months, this is like finally reaching the light at the end of the tunnel.

Bouncing back with a birdie

It's something the pros do on a regular basis, but the average amateur is more likely to follow a disaster with a catastrophe. A bit of 'bouncebackability' is great for morale.

Looking for your opponent's ball in the cabbage, knowing you're in the middle of the fairway

We all enjoy a spot of schadenfreude.



A links course at dusk or dawn

For many, this is the ultimate playing scenario – the tee is empty, the slightest hint of a breeze carries the call of a skylark and you breathe in gorse as the sun's first, or last, rays gently warm your back. Nobody in front or behind, you play round with a sense of total serenity and relaxation

Using phrases like, "It's pretty thick, isn't it?" and "Surely it didn't get this far" will further improve the experience.

Getting a dangerous drive away

Taking aim at a narrow ribbon of fairway threading between countless hazards, you say a brief prayer to Old Tom Morris. The feeling of disbelieving elation as you see your ball bounding down the strip is hard to match.

A pitch that grabs on the second bounce

This is the preserve of the properly good golfer and if you can do it consistently you must be one. If you do it once in a while? Well, just enjoy it.

Making a birdie at the last

No matter how bad the rest of the round has been, a birdie on the closing hole will make that post-round pint taste just a little sweeter.

Winning a longest drive or nearest the pin competition

If you can't go up to collect the trophy

for the winning score, this is the next best thing. It shows you've got the talent in there somewhere, doesn't it?

Playing a hole strategically and reaping the rewards

You've studied the course planner and have a firm idea of how you're going to tackle this tricky hole. You play safely from the tee, lay up to the correct spot then get up and down – that's golf.

Playing every Open course in the UK

Like a mountaineer climbing every Munro or a jogger running the London Marathon, completing rounds at each of the 14 courses to have hosted golf's greatest championship is a badge of honour for the true aficionado of our great game.

The Sunday roll-up

Highly sociable, yet fiercely competitive, the club roll-up is where you pit yourself against your closest golfing friends and rivals. It presents a chance for choice banter and great needle.

Beating a course that has previously beaten you

"I am a good golfer, conqueror of my local municipal and loyal servant of the utility club and draw-bias driver. I will have my vengeance in this round or the next."

Watching the last day of The Open at your club

A few pints with like-minded golf lovers as you enjoy five hours of coverage from the great championship. There can't be many better ways to spend an afternoon.

The Open Arms

Their regularity and cheering reassurance makes outposts of the Open Arms an integral part of any adult Open Championship viewing experience.

Being able to advise on the rules

You understand the game, people respect your opinion and you can feel smug knowing something somebody else doesn't.

Taking a pencil bag on a perfect summer's day

Playing a round unburdened by the trappings of the modern game is a cleansing experience.

Playing off the championship tees

It's not something you'd want to do every round, but to tackle a course at its most challenging can be both eye-opening and rewarding.

The night before playing 36 holes

Your clubs and shoes are cleaned, your equipment is laid out and you feel like a nine-year-old on Christmas Eve.

A crisply struck long-iron

Greg Norman can do it and, on this occasion at least, so can you.



➤

100 Greatest Things In Golf

A night out after a golf day when you've won the money

Okay, you might have to stand a couple of rounds of drinks, but you'll enjoy an entire evening of bragging rights.

Driving through the gates of a course you're about to play for the first time

This could be the greatest course you ever play; this could be the finest round of your life. It could...

Receiving a phone call from an old pal inviting you for a game

It's like winning on Premium Bonds: out of the blue, but very welcome.

A power shower in the clubhouse after a long, hard round

Your moisture-wicking shirt has been wicking overtime and you've racked up an impressive 23 points. How good it is to just wash it all away.

A Brit winning a Major

It hadn't happened for a while until Graeme McDowell stepped up at Pebble Beach in 2010, but his victory reminded the British golf-viewing public just how exciting it is to watch one of their own claim one of the game's biggest prizes. Since then, Darren Clarke, Justin Rose, Rory McIlroy and Danny Willett have turned a famine into a feast – it's now eight British Majors since the start of 2010.

little of each I think." After a traditional golf club carvery you won't need to eat again for days.

Out-driving your playing partners

"What, that's your ball? So, that must be mine up there? Goodness, I didn't think I'd struck it that well!"

Ending the season with a lower handicap than you started with

It must have been a good year.

A perfectly revetted bunker

Like a tidy desk or a newly cleaned car, aesthetically it's highly satisfying.

Winning money on a golf tournament

- betting prowess

Your hard-earned knowledge of the sport is finally paying dividends.

Practice days at pro events, watching top pros up close

It's amazing to get a clear view of just how good these guys are. The atmosphere is relaxed as the best exponents of our game display every shot in the book.

Playing a men's four-day open

It's great competition, there's real camaraderie between all the participants and there's just so much golf to be played.



Finding an old putter you remember you love

Scouring the garage for a box of Rawlplugs, you come across a wand you once wielded like a wizard of the greens. You can't remember why it ever left the bag and you vow there and then it never will again.

A productive lesson

You go with a problem but leave with a solution and can't wait for the Saturday Medal as a result.

Getting four sets of clubs in the boot of an ordinary car

Packing a car is a proper macho challenge. Doing it well, particularly when your mission is golf, shows you are a real man.

The feel of a fresh new cabretta leather glove

Sometimes it's nice to slip into something a little more comfortable. A new leather glove inspires confidence throughout your whole game.

A clean pair of golf shoes

You wouldn't see



Seeing a top pro have a disaster

More schadenfreude – it's comforting to know it can happen to anyone

Not losing a ball in a round

Whatever you score, it's been economical.

A perfect punch shot into the wind

One of golf's most challenging shots, it shows you do, in fact, have some control over your ball.

Carrying a half-set

It's always great to carry your clubs, and this way you won't have to spend the next morning at the chiropractor.

The traditional golf club carvery

"Beef, pork or chicken sir?" "I'll have a

It's time to reinstate your old flat-stick

Luke Donald stepping out onto the links with his brogues caked in mud now, would you?

A sprawling, empty putting green

You've half an hour to spare, a new sleeve of balls and a freshly cut, untouched putting green to forge out onto. Pure practice pleasure.

Getting a great tip

Whether it's from a pro or just a playing partner, you feel like you've been let in on a well-kept secret.

Being first off

Knowing there's nobody to hold you up and the round will be played at your pace is a massive boost.

Reading a great golf book

History, instruction or opinion, there's so much to learn about this great game – and a lot of choice.

Playing a Seve-like recovery shot

You might pull it off only once every ten times, but when you execute the high-tariff recovery shot, your playing partners will worship you as a god.



A sausage sandwich at the halfway hut

Why don't more courses have halfway huts? A rejuvenating sausage sandwich keeps the engine running until you reach the sanctuary of the clubhouse.

Keeping a six off your card

This shows a remarkable level of consistent, solid play. You have to avoid sevens and eights as well, mind you.

Playing with a professional

It's great to see first hand just how the game should be played.

Not suffering a blob in a Stableford

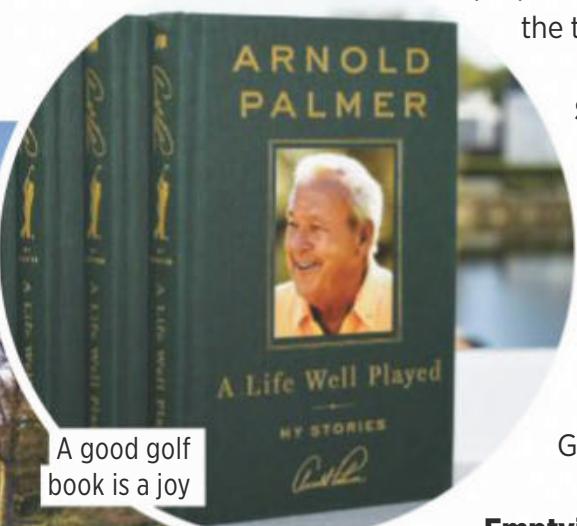
You've got round 18 holes without suffering a complete meltdown. Skills.

Getting round in under three hours

A swift round means you can do something else with your day, go out for a few more holes or just spend a little longer in the bar.

A putting surface framed by towering trees

It looks great and it provides a brilliant natural boundary.



A good golf book is a joy



Practice perfection: an empty putting green

Watching old matches on Shell's Wonderful World of Golf

A spot of golfing nostalgia in the company of Gene Sarazen, Henry Cotton, Arnold Palmer et al.

Knowing a youngster who goes on to make it in the big time

If you can't get there yourself, doing it vicariously is the next best thing.

Putting on the carpet at home

It's surely the place where you produce your purest strokes.

Watching The Masters on TV

The azaleas, the towering pines and the lightning-fast greens, The Masters heralds the start of the golfing season and provides a visual feast for the armchair fan.

Watching the European Tour leaderboard at work

You should be writing that report, but instead you're tracking the progress of Robert Rock in the Italian Open.

Stripes on a newly mown fairway

The course has been recently prepared and is there for the taking.

Seeing your clubs coming around the carousel at the airport

You're on holiday, you're going to play golf and your clubs are there. Good on all fronts.

Emptying the rubbish from your golf bag

This is an important cathartic process to remove all reminders of previous golfing disasters.

Someone producing a hip-flask when you're having a bad day

Golf and alcohol enjoy a symbiotic relationship. For the struggling golfer, the healing powers of hard liquor are obvious and undeniable.

Odd golf drinks

Where else but a golf club would you order a Russian Gunner or a Whisky Mac? Then of course there's Kummel...

"I WANT TO CHASE

Words: **Michael Weston** | Photography: **Getty Images**

Justin Rose has enjoyed an exceptional career to date, but he's not planning on slowing down any time soon...

Justin Rose is “on the verge” of making his career a special one. On the face of it, this would seem quite a statement. At 38, he’s a Major Champion, Olympic gold medallist, three-time Ryder Cup winner and, courtesy of last year’s FedExCup triumph, now a Money List winner on both major tours. He’s not trying to fire a warning shot to his rivals, even if it sounds like one. For Rose, there are long-standing targets he’s yet to achieve, with last season almost a stepping stone to greater success.

Having spent the last day travelling across 11 time zones to play in the inaugural Saudi International, he could

be forgiven for feeling a little weary – grouchy, even. Rose is in a typically buoyant mood, however, no doubt feeling boosted by PGA Tour title number ten that came 48 hours earlier at the Farmers Insurance Open.

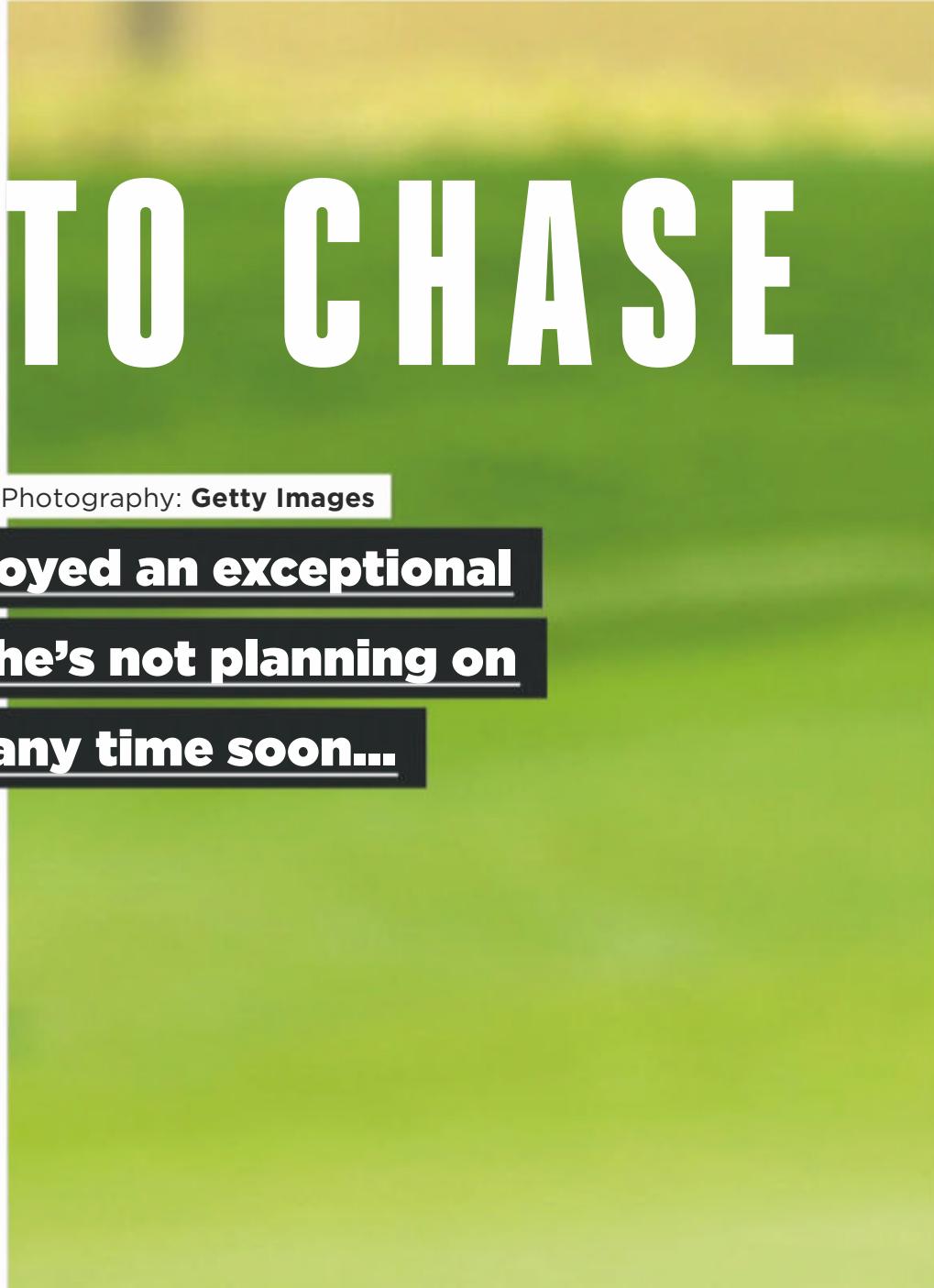
When he eventually sits back with a long overdue cup of tea, he reveals why he’s so excited by the next chapter in his career.

“I want to chase history and my legacy in the game,” says Rose, whose win at Torrey Pines saw him pass six-time Major winner Nick Faldo’s PGA Tour haul of nine. “The FedExCup is wonderful, but it’s about the achievement of winning something season-long. The cheque was obviously a big one, but I look at the

FedExCup in my trophy room and that’s what it’s about for me.”

When, in 2013, Rose became the first Englishman for 43 years to win the US Open, there was a feeling he could add one or two more in relatively quick time. He’s come close on several occasions. Twice now he’s been the bridesmaid at Augusta, and last year he narrowly missed out on a play-off for the Claret Jug after charging through the field from the cut line.

However, Rose is not about to become obsessive in his pursuit of further Major titles, even if they are on the agenda. “Golf is hard,” he continues. “Majors are hard to win, but I think my game suits Major Championship golf. I don’t



HISTORY"



Justin Rose

just want to win one Major; I want to win all the Majors I haven't won. There's a lot of work for me to do in the next five, six, seven years of my career, as long as I feel fit and fresh and healthy. It's a big goal of mine to kick on and do that."

For a player who's won so many of the game's top honours, it's remarkable he should talk about a lack of confidence, but, at times, this is what has held him back. "I feel like I'm finally starting to fulfil my potential that people have always told me I had," he says. "People telling you is one thing, but you've got to learn to believe it yourself. I've probably been a little bit slower on the believing myself part of the game. When I do that, and when I get all aspects of my game right, I will be hard to beat."

No standing still

He's hard to get the better of now, of course. Last season's FedExCup victory was built on consistently challenging for titles. As well as two PGA Tour victories, which included a second World Golf Championship, he successfully defended his Turkish Airlines Open crown and amassed a staggering 16 top tens across both tours.



The US Open remains his sole Major triumph

With career earnings of over \$50 million on the PGA Tour alone, the man who learned his trade in Hampshire has come a long way since collecting the Silver Medal at Royal Birkdale in 1998. There's no need to recap the challenging start to his career; the number '21' doesn't even come up. Those missed cuts have long been confined to the past and Rose is not one to dwell. When the chips have been down, he's worked hard on his game; he's had to in order to fix what he terms some "glaring gaps".

Five years ago he went to work on adding distance to his game with something he called 'Project 300'. "I felt I had to start competing and hitting

the ball further," Rose explains. "You can't play this game without power anymore; you can't get to the top without power. Physically it took its toll. My back started hurting again in 2016, so I've had to learn how to harness that extra speed safely. There's always a knock-on effect and you learn as you go."

More recently, Rose raised a few eyebrows when, after 20 years with TaylorMade, he signed an equipment deal with Honma. It was a risky strategy, although he saw it as a way of improving his iron play – incomprehensible to the majority who have always regarded him as one of the best ball-strikers in the game. While critics were busy questioning the decision, he won on just his second outing of 2019, having only taken his new clubs to the course the previous week.

"Honma was the perfect fit for me from a blade construction point of view," says Rose. "I discussed everything with them: bounce, sole, leading edge, groove length and the way the toe rounds. A blade is kind of like a relationship; you want to look down and it needs to look good and feel good, so we've really worked hard on that."

Rose switched to Honma at the start of 2019



There's genuine enthusiasm for golf club engineering when he talks about his work with the Japanese manufacturer, an interest that has clearly helped him to get every ounce of performance possible from his equipment. "Even last minute I was tweaking loft and lies because once you get into tournament mode you notice things that you don't quite notice when you're on the range. They feel great and the driver's probably been the biggest surprise about how easily I've transitioned into that."

Always looking to improve

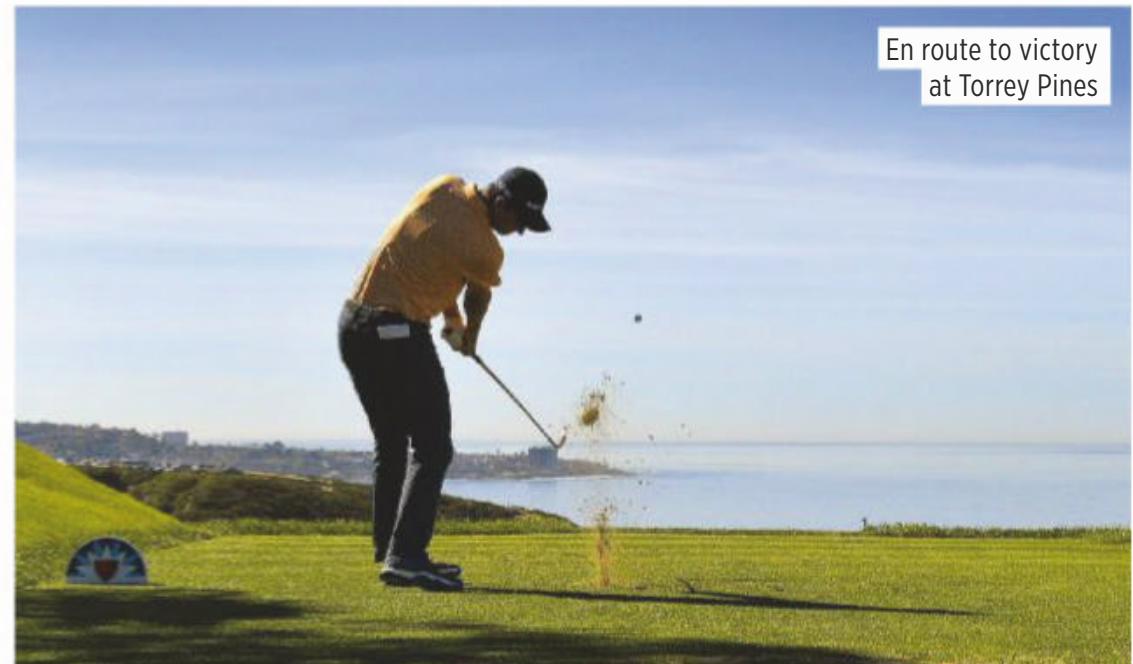
Equipment sorted and win number one of the season already in the bag, there's surely nothing to worry about? To an extent this may be true, but Rose is not one to rest on his laurels. There are weaknesses in his game – if you can call them that – and although not a concern, if he's to fulfil his lofty ambitions he knows there are areas where he can improve.

"There's no one in the game who I feel has anything over me when I'm playing well"

"There's a real fine line between driving yourself mad and improving," Rose explains. "I'm always looking where I can make marginal gains. Obviously you've got to take care of your strengths, too, that's what keeps creating good scoring opportunities.

"I would say I could make more mid-range putts, 20, 25 feet – those are the putts that really sharpen up the scorecard. Last year my big improvement was three to eight feet. I've got to keep that going, but if I could improve on making some more mid-range putts that would be huge."

He doesn't stop there. Forget what you saw last season when Rose was seemingly peppering the flag every Sunday afternoon. "I'm not sure statistically this really adds up, but I would say having more confidence in my wedge game is an area I can improve," he says. "Sometimes I take too many risks when I'm out of position because I feel like I need to get it to the green or around the green, rather than laying up to a number where I can make par."



En route to victory
at Torrey Pines

There's reference to a double-bogey he made en route to winning the Farmers Insurance Open and it tells you everything about the World No.1's psyche – there's always room for improvement. With a group of players vying for top spot, he's not about to get complacent, even if retaining his position as top dog is no longer so

feel has anything over me when I'm playing well," he says. "That's a nice position to be in and that's never happened in my career. I've worked hard to get to that point.

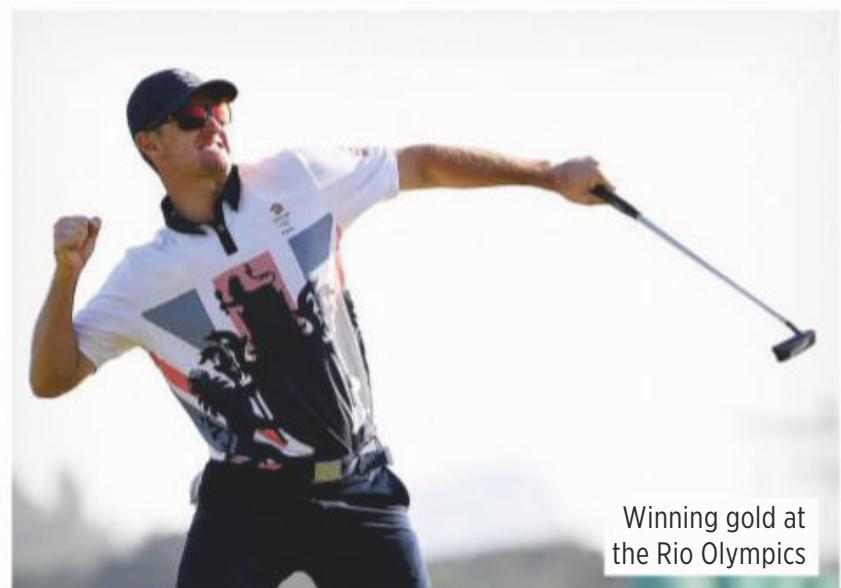
"Now one of my major goals this year is focusing on my recovery, but more importantly being ready for the Major Championships. If I look at the overall load on my system, 2017 and 2018 have been big years with a lot of travel. I think 2019 is a year for me to cut back just a little bit ahead of 2020. I'm already looking at 2020 as a big year; it's got the Olympics and the Ryder Cup, so recovery is important."

A little rest and relaxation between the US Open and The Open Championship will help, so too will his new boat. Rose may have suffered a rare missed cut in Saudi Arabia, but his win at Torrey Pines suggests that another glittering season lies ahead. A summer cruise round the Mediterranean offers the perfect opportunity to sit back and prepare for Portrush and another crack at the Claret Jug. It would be a big one to tick off the list.

much of a focus. Even so, does any one player have what it takes to dominate that number-one spot?

"I think there's still room for that," he says. "If you judge it by Tiger's standards then probably not. To keep it together, to keep it at the very top for so long and for one man to be so dominant is very rare. I think we should all respect Tiger for what he's done. Unfortunately I think he's spoilt it for the rest of us because he's created the benchmark that is very hard to live up to."

Although the world-number-one spot may not be a focus going forward, getting there has been an important part of the process. He now has that belief that previously he may have lacked. "There's no one in the game who I play with who I



Winning gold at
the Rio Olympics

Flying

Words: Michael Weston
Photography: Getty Images



High

Brooks Koepka has clocked up the air miles in his quest for the top. Now the three-time Major winner is reaping the rewards

Bay La Sun Hotel in King Abdullah Economic City is starting to get busy. It's tournament week and four of the world's top five are here for the Saudi International. One of these players ambles into the restaurant in a T-shirt and joggers and weighs up his lunch options. He would not look out of place in a boxing ring. An aura surrounds Brooks Koepka as he sits down with his entourage – no wonder given his recent Major record.

In October, he became
World No.1 for ➤



Brooks Koepka

the first time, before trading the top spot with Justin Rose on several occasions. It came on the back of a vintage year that saw him successfully defend his US Open title at Shinnecock Hills and add Major number three at the USPGA. For those who have always kept an eye on the Challenge Tour, his potential was evident. This is where the Florida native decided to cut his teeth after turning pro in 2012, and it seems like a good place to begin.

An unconventional start

"It was fun, I enjoyed playing overseas," says the 28-year-old. "It was nice learning how to be a pro, having a good introduction to it, and then travelling the world at 21, 22 years old, that was pretty sweet too. Some of the guys and caddies I met are still my close friends today. It's nice to have that foundation. They've known me

new places and accumulating air miles comes with the territory. This is Koepka's first visit to Saudi Arabia and he values playing in new destinations. "It's a job, you've got to do it," he says. "You've got to be away from your family if you want to do this for a living. It's going to take you to a lot of places. You better get used to it and jump in and embrace it. I'm going to play where I want to play. I know which courses I like and don't like."

The PGA Tour's loss is the European Tour's gain when it comes to the latter's 'desert swing' at the turn of the year. "I'm not a big fan of the west coast," Koepka explains. "That's why you'll see me over here. I like Phoenix but that's about the only one. Once the tour gets to the east coast I find which courses work for me and I just keep going back to them. I think everyone else does the same thing. I mean, you

"I just don't understand how it takes a minute and 20 seconds to hit a golf ball. It's embarrassing"

since I was nobody. We all had a blast and just enjoyed life."

And it's clear Koepka does enjoy himself. If there's a robotic nature in the way he goes about his business on the golf course, away from the fairways he treats life a little differently. Press conferences don't usually involve questions about thongs, but a photo has attracted some attention following a recent holiday in the Maldives. "I was trying to pretend like I was some Instagram model," he jokes – and it's back to the golf, much to the relief of everyone in the room.

Koepka is no home bird, and not just when it comes to holidaying. Life in Europe whetted the appetite to explore

look at Tiger's career and it's pretty obvious which ones he likes to play."

After winning his first Challenge Tour title in 2012 at the Challenge de Catalunya, he breezed through his next full season, winning three times to graduate to the next level. In 2014, he recorded his first top-five on the European Tour, finishing tied third at the Dubai Desert Classic, before claiming his maiden victory at the Turkish Airlines nine months later.

"It was nice to finally break through," he recalls. "I hadn't won all year, so that was special, something I always wanted to do. Any time you win an important event like that it's quite special. It was my first win

against some really good players. Going down the stretch with Poulter was fun. It was kind of my first taste of the big stage."

This last bit isn't strictly true. In the summer, he'd proved himself to be quite adept at handling one of, if not the, toughest test in golf – the US Open. Pinehurst presented typically brutal conditions



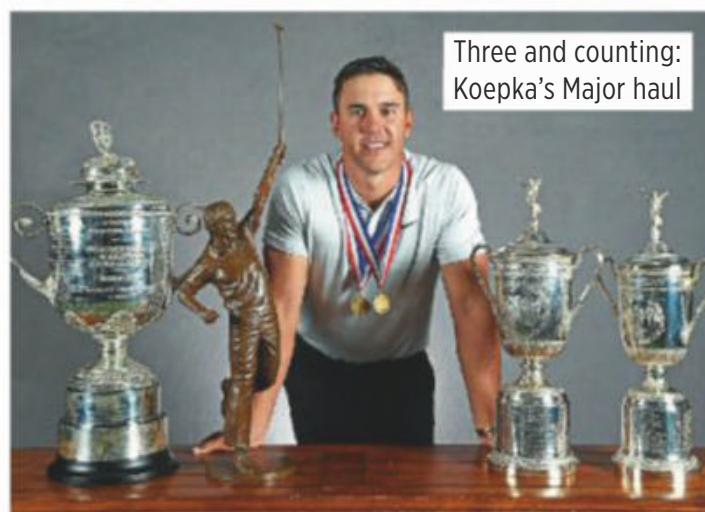
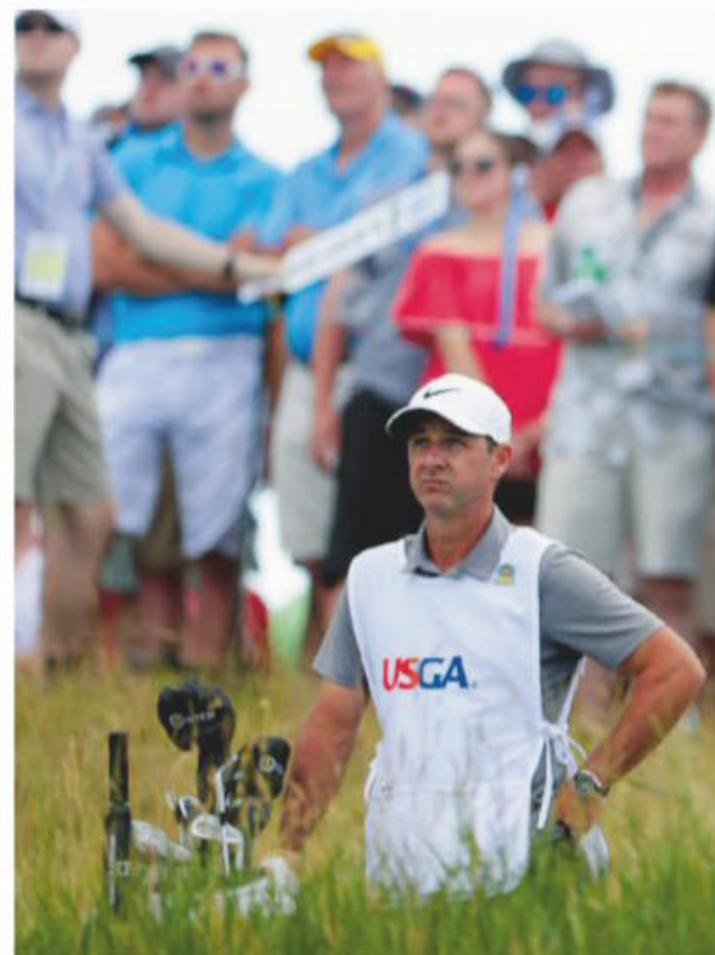
Koepka: "Physically talented"

that year. Only Martin Kaymer thought otherwise, the German winning by eight from the only other two players in the entire field to finish under par. Koepka finished in a tie for fourth in just his second US Open appearance. It was a stage he looked comfortable on.

Moving up the rankings

His first PGA Tour victory arrived at the 2015 Phoenix Open, at which point he moved inside the world's top 20. Top tens then became routine; they came at The Open and USPGA, and also when he returned to the European Tour for the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship, where he finished runner-up. Still, winning was proving elusive and it wasn't until November 2016 that he tasted success again – this time in Japan at the Dunlop Phoenix. Then, in 2017, he landed one of the big ones – the US Open. In bringing Erin Hills to its knees, he tied Rory McIlroy's 16-under tournament record.

A year later he became just the third player since World War II to successfully defend his US Open title.



Then, to cap off a miraculous year, he captured the USPGA at Bellerive, where he spoilt the Tiger Woods comeback show with a ruthless display.

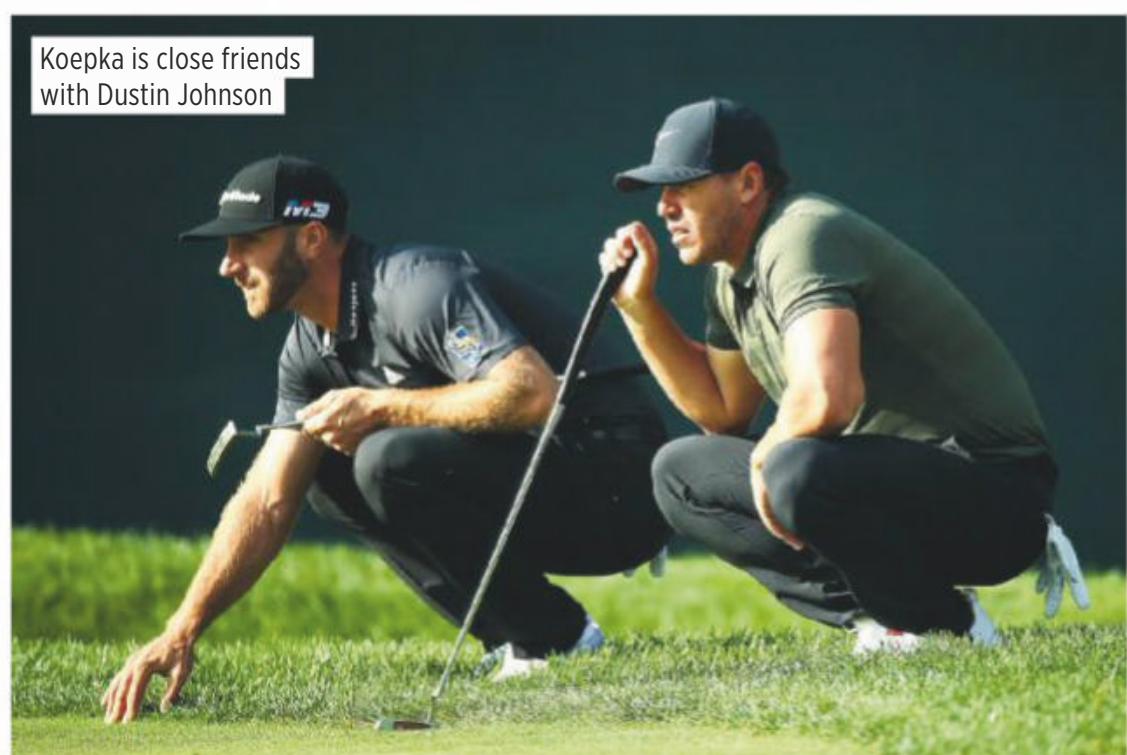
"That was cool," he says. "Obviously it was the first time I'd played a Major where both of us were in contention, so that was special. It's what you dream of when you're a little kid."

It was a phenomenal achievement, especially given how his year started. A partially torn tendon in his wrist threatened to curtail his career and in April he had been forced to withdraw from The Masters.

As fate would have it, his coach, Claude Harmon, spoke to *Golf Monthly* in Saudi Arabia during the opening of Royal Greens Golf & Country Club and told how his player was "making significant progress" with his rehabilitation. It was hard to believe given the severity of the injury, yet eight months later Koepka arrived for the inaugural Saudi International with two more Majors under his belt.

"It was pretty bad," Koepka recalls of the injury. "I didn't know if I was going to come back; whether I was even going to be the same; whether I was going to have to change my swing. I wasn't really thinking about that. I know it's ended a few guys' careers but I wasn't focused on it. I'm lucky where I'm physically gifted a lot more than other people, and I'm a lot stronger than other guys – mentally, physically – so I figured what some can't grind

Koepka is close friends with Dustin Johnson



through, I can. Eventually it's probably going to fully tear, but you never know!"

That last bit may be said in jest, but he's deadly serious about his physical advantages; he's quite an athlete – and a very self-assured one. Asked whether the time off caused him any doubt as to whether he could win again, he adds: "Not really. I've played regular tour events and had a month off in between, not touched a club and come back and finished second. I'm very athletic, physically talented and so I don't need to put as much time into it. I don't really practice that much when I'm at home. I can't with my wrist."

Speaking his mind

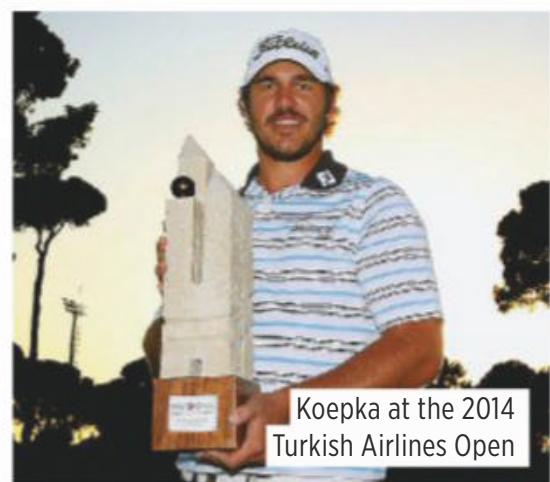
By this point Koepka is in full swing – not literally – rather he's happy to speak his mind, and it's refreshing to hear a player open up. Compatriot Bryson DeChambeau has caused a stir in recent weeks with his slow play and analytical approach to each shot. Koepka isn't impressed.

"I just don't understand how it takes a minute and 20 seconds to hit a golf ball," he says. "It's not that hard. It's always between two clubs; there's a miss short, there's a miss long. It really drives me nuts, especially when it's a long hitter because you know you've got two other guys, or at least one guy, hitting before you so you can do all your calculations; you should have your numbers. Guys are already so slow it's kind of embarrassing."

A few days later he calls out Sergio Garcia for "acting like a child" at the Saudi International, where the Spaniard was disqualified for "serious

misconduct". Publicly criticising his peers is perhaps not something he'd have done a couple of years ago, but having won three of his last six Majors, maybe he feels he's earned the right to call it how he sees it – and why not?

So what's this holidaying business with his close friend, and rival, Dustin Johnson all about? Surely it's not ideal being so close to someone you're bound to come face to face with down the stretch on a Sunday. "I couldn't care less," he says. "For the whole time



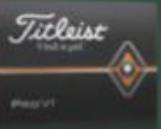
Koepka at the 2014 Turkish Airlines Open

we're on the course it's competitive so I'm not really worried. I'm trying to beat him as well as 142 other guys, but then the second we're off the golf course I can still enjoy our friendship; if I can't win I'm hoping he does."

Presumably he was watching as Johnson eased to victory just a few days later. It's not Koepka's week, but no doubt he'll return to the Middle East next year, perhaps with another Major to his name. As it happens, his caddie, Ricky Elliott, is from Portrush, this year's Open venue. An omen? Nothing would appear to be beyond this confident young man's reach.

His first Major came at the 2017 US Open





MORE PRECISION. MORE CONSISTENCY. MORE SPEED.

Words: **Bill Elliott** Photography: **Getty Images**

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL

After a turbulent start to the season, the world of professional golf needs The Masters more than ever...

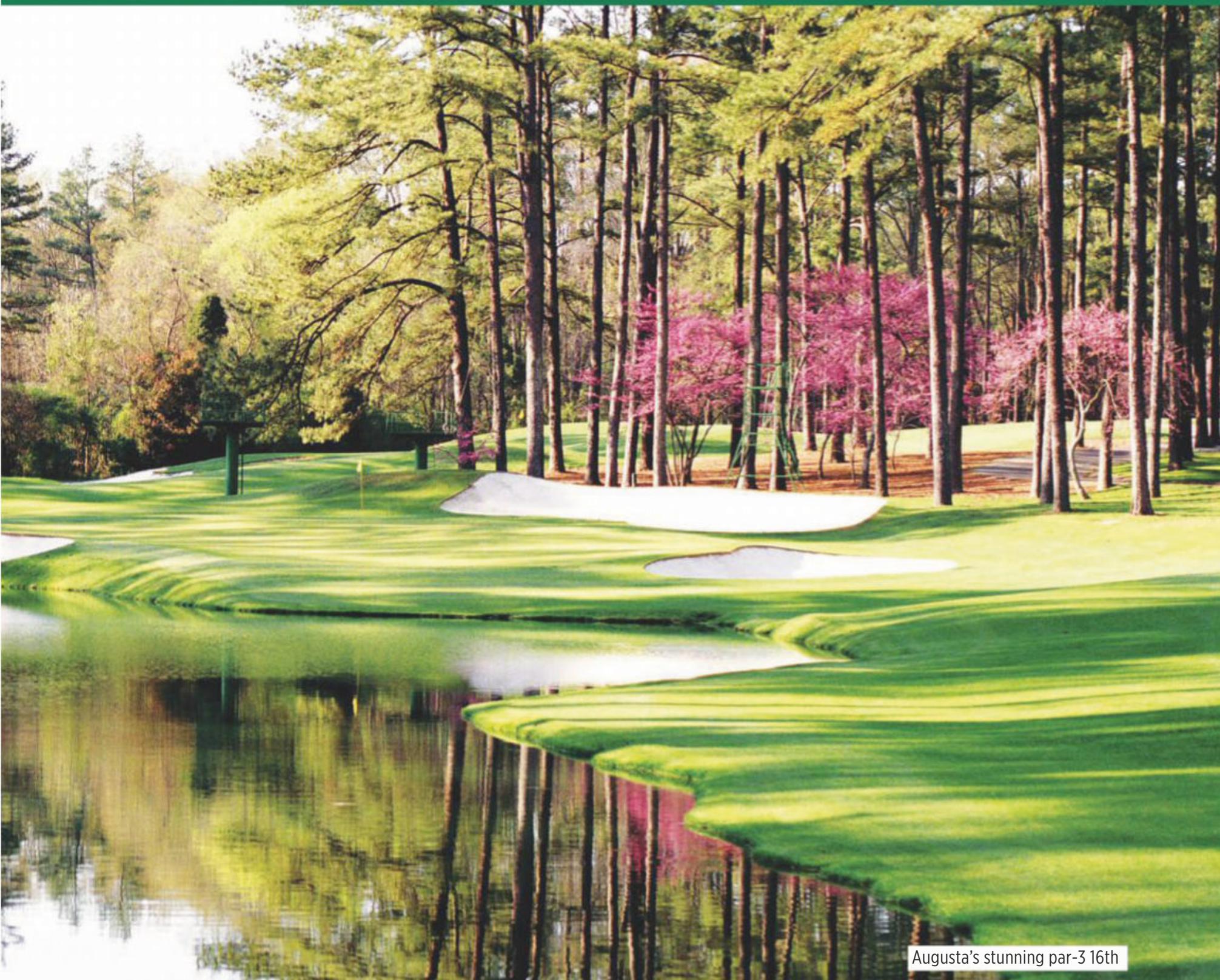


After a troubled, occasionally baffling and often seriously irritating start to things in 2019, professional golf needs an oasis – and here it comes in the shape of Augusta National and The Masters. Rarely, if ever in my lifetime, has it been more welcome.

Whatever else it is, no matter how much of it may be very effective smoke and mirrors or how many seemingly petty, arcane rules are there to be broken by the uninformed, this technicolour



week is all but guaranteed to deliver fun, excitement and often quite brilliant golf. As an antidote to the latest rules fiasco and super-slow-play (the only thing JB Holmes seems to do quickly is to get dressed, seemingly in the dark), plus Matt Kuchar's miserly payment to a caddie on top of a shocking episode of idiotic on-course vandalism by Sergio Garcia (why didn't the Augusta hierarchy withdraw his invitation until he finally grows up somewhere around 2050?), this Masters is our first big hope of some much-needed polishing of the old game's public image.



Augusta's stunning par-3 16th

Thankfully, I've every confidence that Augusta's annual jamboree will rather sedately ride – slowly, remember there's no running if you are there – to the rescue and deliver what we want. It usually does, of course, its combination of charm and almost instant tradition, on top of a course as scenically beautiful as it is razor-sharp dangerous, offering a seemingly timeless contrast to much that is wearisome in the modern, hectic landscape.

Significantly, Augusta offers its own version of tranquillity. To wander amidst the pines and the azaleas in spring sunshine when serious play actually starts – it's now, for me, too crowded on practice days – is bliss. Some of you will have paid thousands for this privilege, some of you plan to do so before it's too late. Is it worth it? If you've got the money and if the children have shoes on their feet and food on the table then, yes, absolutely.

This tranquillity oozes naturally out of the setting and this reassuring embrace is enhanced by the continuing ban on mobile phones, the great



Will the Curse of the Missing Grand Slam continue for Rory?

blessing and curse of our age. Several years ago I believed this no phone thing to be an arrogance. I couldn't see it lasting and felt that, as The R&A has done at The Open and the USGA at its championship, the men in charge at Augusta would see the errors of their way and concede to popular demand.

Instead, as is their way so often, they have stuck to their 'red line' and what

started out as an anachronism seems to have transmogrified into smart, forward thinking. Instead of watching The Masters through the prism of their phone screens, the spectators actually watch the action unfold before their own eyes. Instead of chatting to a friend about where they are standing, they are actually absorbing through all senses the sounds, sights and smells of this place. This, I now

Augusta National oozes tranquillity





Danny Willett's win came as a shock to many

believe, is a good thing. Augusta National, maybe accidentally, has turned itself into a respite area free of the constant, mundane chatter and scattergun photography that crowds out so much else that is relevant to life, never mind the simple joy of watching some blokes whack a ball around a beautifully manicured hillside.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

I no longer make the trip to Georgia in springtime, but for 35 years I did just that and the memories from those Aprils remain vibrant and warm. Over time I grew to both appreciate and love this perfectly formed little city with its 200,000 population and more churches per head than anywhere else in the USA. Going to The Masters every year, going to church every Sunday, these are the Augusta traditions. I loved discovering its history, its drawling southerness, its areas of old-style elegance and its occasionally startling districts of in-your-face vulgarity. All set against the majesty of the Savannah River.

Southern fried chicken, a stroll by the river at sunset or a strip club? Your choice. Maybe all three. Since I first arrived in town a lot of things have changed, including the scale of The Masters itself. The city too has grown, reshaped much of itself, become a hugely important centre for medical research and is also now America's fortress HQ against cyber warfare and a

danger that didn't exist when Greg Norman was tilting at his biggest, most contrary, windmill.

If there is something for everyone in Augusta the place, then there is also a lot

“To wander amidst the pines and azaleas in the spring sunshine when serious play starts is bliss”

to savour at Augusta the golf course. Second only to The Old Course in terms of global fame, it is obviously a gem. It's also a very private gem and a club that fiercely, almost cultishly, protects its exclusivity. This is one of the reasons why, quite rightly, it lags a long way behind St Andrews, which is effectively public property. If I had to choose, then Scotland's cathedral wins every time.



Tiger's taming of the course led to much change

This said, playing Augusta is very special. I've played it once, some 13 years ago when, off a handicap of 15, my ambition was to break 100. To my delight I arrived on the 18th tee needing a five for a gross 99, thanks to a brilliant caddie who masterminded everything except the actual club swinging bit. Anyway, I three-putted the final green to return 100 which, even at the time, I felt was fitting. Few golfers, whether skilled pro or enthusiastic hacker like myself, ever exceed, or indeed match, realistic expectation when tackling this aesthetically pleasing minefield.

Which thought brings me on to what the early signs are for this year's Masters. As you may know, I've long since given up the forecasting game. Fact is your guess is as good as mine and the other fact is that we're both almost certainly wrong. Who, after all, would have seriously predicted the last three Masters champs. Danny Willett, Sergio Garcia and

Patrick Reed, two of whom (Willett, who two years later is only just beginning to get over his own surprise, while Garcia routinely discarded his chances of ever winning) were genuine shocks, while Reed's was as unexpected as it was dully celebrated at the time.

This does not, however, mean that anyone may win The Masters. Far from it. This week may be the most glamorous, most watched golf tournament of the year, attracting a huge non-golf audience on top of you aficionados, but it is also the easiest Major for an elite player to win. While the earlier mentioned trio's success neatly fell into the 'who'd have thunk it' category, it was also, perversely, relatively predictable because each of them came from high up the world rankings. Consider this: there will be around 90 competitors competing for the Green Jacket and we may immediately discount at least 40 of them – these include the older returning past champions, awestruck amateurs or players who are just not good enough – so that we are left with a maximum of 50 players who either

have a serious or at least sensible chance of glory. Even then, probably another 25 are longer shots than my chances of a par at the 18th.

THE ELUSIVE GRAND SLAM

Prominent among the first group of seriously involved competitors is, of course, Rory McIlroy. Yet would you back the bouncy Ulsterman after last year's feeble Sunday effort? Thought not. There is no doubt that McIlroy has the artillery to win a Masters, but does he any longer have the conviction? Not enough, I'm afraid. If he does have a chance then I believe it will only come if he is several shots behind the leaders and goes for broke on Sunday, riding the coat-tails of carefree momentum and almost forgetting where he is actually playing. Unlikely, I agree. Mind you, it's worth adding that he has finished top ten in his last five Masters. That he will



On his day, Justin Thomas is hard to beat

be a serious contender come the weekend is beyond reasonable doubt, it's the next vital bit that remains deeply problematic. His main rivals, meanwhile, will surely, predictably, come from the world top 20.

McIlroy this year added to his lengthening list of forthright comments when he said that The Masters "has the most amount of eyeballs, the most amount of hype... for me it's the most special tournament that we play". He is right, of course. It is indeed special, but it is not the most significant. Our own Open embraces this title thanks to the old rumble's history, courses and spread of world players. Ditto the US Open. What is beyond doubt, however, is that The Masters is by far the most significant for McIlroy personally because it obstinately remains the missing piece of his Grand Slam jigsaw and the week that both excites and troubles him too much.

According to the thoughts of one prominent sports psychologist, the wee man lacks "golf maturity", which strikes me as a bit daft about a player who, at 29, already has four big ones to his name – four more, remember, than Nick Faldo had at the same age. What is also true, however, is that he seems now to panic a bit when in contention at The Masters and this, of course, may be because he wants it too much. The fine line between too nervous and over-excited is the thinnest in sport. He is trying to combat this by saying that this year The Open in Northern Ireland is his biggest week, that to win there would, just this once, trump The Masters. It's a smart way of trying to divert any self-imposed pressure prior to Augusta. Good luck with that, Rory.

It was during a long wander through a wine list at a lunch with some golf-writing pals recently that one of them asked me what I thought about the Curse of the Missing Grand Slam and how it has clearly affected the likes

of McIlroy. He is spot on. There seems to be something here that eats into every player who finds himself just one step away from joining Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods as the only golfers to have won the professional game's version of the Holy Grail.

Many great golfers have failed in their quest for the missing link: men like Arnold Palmer, who never won the USPGA, Sam Snead, US Open, Byron Nelson, The Open, Tom Watson, USPGA, Lee Trevino, Masters and Ray Floyd, The Open. Alongside McIlroy, the current glory seekers are Jordan Spieth, USPGA and Phil Mickelson, whose six runner-up spots in the US Open suggest he is more cursed than most.

We can be sure that this gap eats into their gut even while they spend a pleasant hour gazing at their bank accounts. It's not what a man wants and doesn't get that dismays him most in the end, it's what he really, really needs and fails to secure that hurts and these blokes really need their missing Major. There are, of course, far worse places to be, but still, it must be seriously frustrating to be so close to such a



satisfying, ego-quenching slice of sporting immortality. Is it merely luck they lack or are they tending to trip themselves up? It's a conundrum.

THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

Meanwhile, the biggest change to the course is the 50-yard stretch of the dangerous par-4 5th hole. This extra length should properly bring into play the cavernous bunker on the left-hand side of this rolling, right-to-left fairway and a sandpit that offers a bogey. This hole always has been among the toughest at Augusta, with its tilted, merry-go-round green at the centre of the puzzle, and it is now even harder. However, the strategy remains the same as always... find the right bit of the fairway, the correct patch of green, putt like Jordan Spieth used to do and average three-under-par for the par 5s each day. This was always dear Seve's plan. Simple, eh?

Tiger Woods, remember him, admitted this year that Augusta is much more challenging now than when he first played it. "Back then it really wasn't that hard," he observed. As evidence he pointed out that he used to play a

9-iron into the long 2nd, a sand wedge into the 5th and again at the 7th. The 15th was a drive and an 8-iron while the sand wedge was his approach shot at the last. Since those slap-happy days, Augusta has been stretched like some hapless victim on the rack. It will be stretched more in the years to come as land is bought from adjoining estates. The further they hit it, the more it will be eased backwards. To this end, something towards the thick end of \$100 million has been spent on new land in recent years.

merry mayhem. I suggested a tunnel from the green to the clubhouse, adding that it would make for a terrific piece of unique television to see a player salute the crowd before dramatically disappearing. Maybe accompanied by an Iron Maiden track. Harold, I fear, assumed I was being facetious, which I may have been about the rock music, but I was serious about the tunnel and now I eagerly await its construction. Then again...

If no one will be disappearing into the ground this year – although if Holmes is paired with Bryson

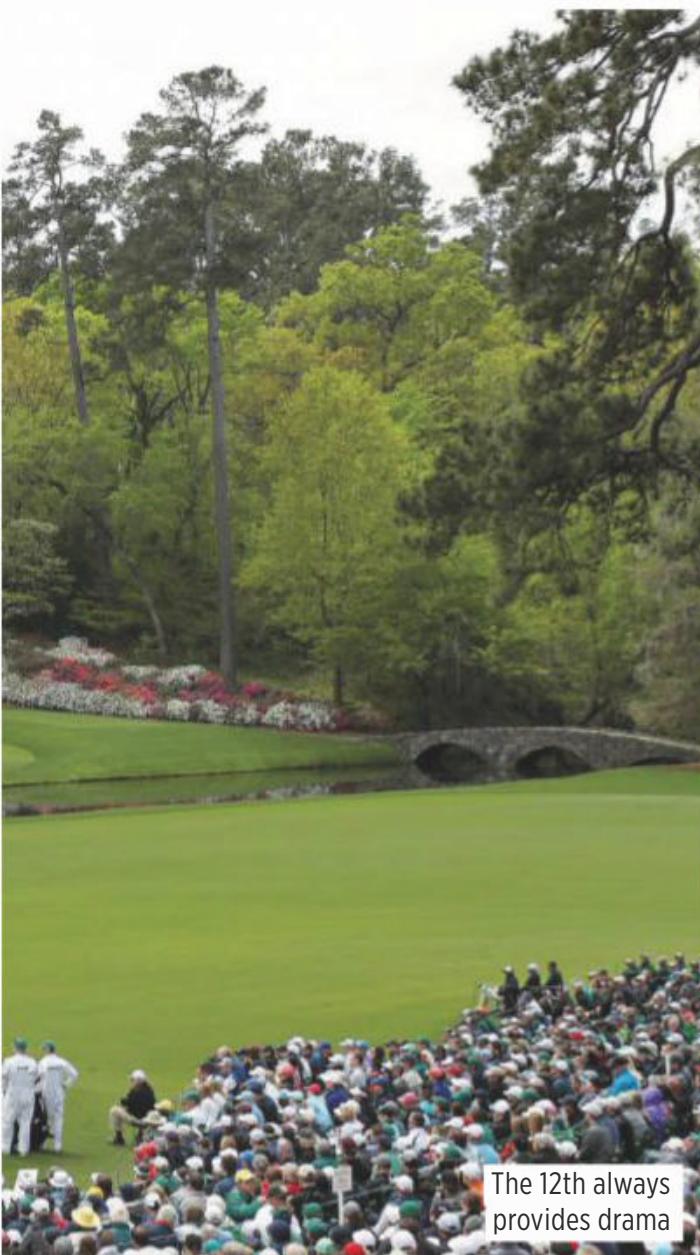
"Since those slap-happy days, Augusta has been stretched like some hapless victim on the rack"

The rich, powerful men who control this place never stop trying to move forward while at the same time appearing to stand still in so many other ways, a neat trick if you can pull it off. This year they will unveil a tunnel that has been built under Washington Road, the main arterial route that runs outside the entrance to the club, and a tunnel big enough to accommodate lorries. Several years ago while taking part in an annual meeting between a few journalists and Harold Andersen, the media committee chairman, he asked us for any solutions we might have for getting players off the 18th green and into the clubhouse.

The problem is at present this involves a walk of some 100 yards through the spectators while other players make their way across the same piece of turf to get to the 10th tee from the 9th green. It is often a chaotic area with journalists chasing the players for a quote and adding to the

DeChambeau more than a few spectators might wish the ground would open up and swallow them – someone will end up floating above it when they win. The most pleasing result for me would be that unexpected McIlroy victory, while the top outcome for the game globally would be a successful Tiger. However... I know I don't do forecasting any more but, hell, just one more time – my money at this point is on Justin Thomas, who on his day can appear the most complete and assured golfer in the world.

Given my traditional, dispiriting, record I'd now ignore him if I were you. Good luck to us all. More than anything else, let's hope this week really is a festival and a celebration of a great game that has been sullied too often so far this year. One way or another, we all deserve a break. The Masters, surely, can be relied on to give us one.



MASTERS QUIZ

Photography: Getty Images

Fancy yourself as someone with great Masters knowledge? See how you get on with these...

5

Only once since the 1950s has a score over-par won The Masters. Which year was that and who won?

4

How many amateurs have finished runner-up at Augusta National?

3

What is the Crow's Nest?

2

On what hole is the Hogan Bridge?

1

Who was the first ever Masters winner?

6

Which former US president was famously a member of Augusta National?

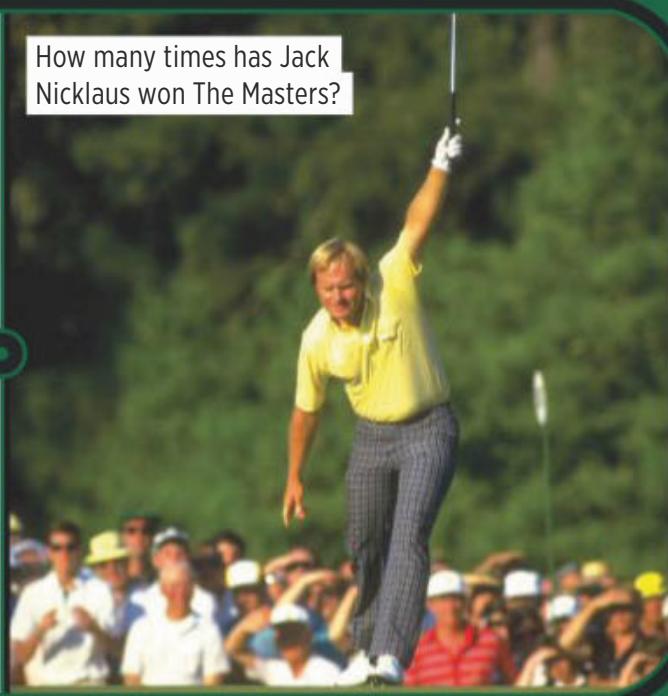
7

Who are the only two Englishmen to have won The Masters?

8

What are each of the holes named after?

How many times has Jack Nicklaus won The Masters?

**11**

In what year did Rory McIlroy have his Masters implosion on the back nine?

10

In which consecutive years did a left-handed player win The Masters?

9

On what hole did Gene Sarazen hit the 'shot heard round the world'?

The 2009
winner was?**12**

Who is the only South American winner of The Masters?

13

Which holes make up Amen Corner?

14

How many players have broken 70 in all four rounds at Augusta?

15

In 2016, how many times did Ernie Els infamously putt on his way to a nine on the opening hole?

20

Arnold Palmer and which other person share the honour of posting the highest final-round score to win The Masters?

19

Who has won the most Masters titles?

18

What prize do you win for recording an eagle at The Masters?

17

The presentation of the Green Jacket began in 1949 – who was the first player to receive one?

16

True or false: Tiger Woods has never led after the first round at Augusta

62%
Up + Down



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Kurt Kitayama

Hitting the ground

Words: **Jeremy Ellwood** | Photography: **Kevin Murray, Getty Images**

**Since coming through Q-School at the
end of last year, Kurt Kitayama has
taken the European Tour by storm**

Only Dustin Johnson and one other player boast multiple wins to date on the 2019 Race to Dubai – a 26-year-old Californian who would have been a

complete unknown over here four months ago. Kurt Kitayama overcame high winds and sand storms in Oman to claim his second European Tour title on his 11th start, having won last December in Mauritius just weeks after coming through all three stages of Q-School. Kitayama did finish eighth on last year's Asian Tour Order of Merit, with three top fours to his name before that co-sanctioned AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open victory, but prior to that, professional golf had proved a bit of a struggle...

What were your goals for the season before Mauritius?

I definitely had goals of winning on the Asian Tour. When I got my European Tour card, I still had three Asian Tour events left that I was trying to win, and it just happened to be a co-sanctioned event, which was a really nice way to set up this year.

running

When did you realise golf could potentially be your career?

Probably my sophomore year at high school was when I figured I was going to be able to go to another level with golf, at least collegiately, rather than basketball. But I continued to play basketball because it gave me some time off from golf.

How hard is it to play basketball when you're only 5ft 7ins?

[Laughs] In high school it's all right – I didn't go to a huge school, so I was able to compete! But I just knew at the next level that golf was going to be the thing for me, and probably my junior year of college was when I really focused on that. I got a scholarship at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, stayed all four years and graduated.

You played the Web.com Tour in 2016 and 2017 – what did you learn from that?

That I had a lot of work to do! I struggled the first year. I only had conditional status and missed six cuts in a row. The following year I was able to get my full card, but again there was a long stretch of golf where I just struggled. It's really frustrating and you get so down on yourself, but when I came over to Asia in 2018, I just got comfortable with travelling and seeing new places and it wasn't a stress. It seemed a lot easier mentally, maybe just because it was something completely different.

The Web.com Tour is so competitive and the talent level is so high. The season is really short, too – you get a stretch where there's ten or 12 events in a row. When you're struggling you don't really want to take time off and you just kind of get on a bad streak. In Asia, you're able to take time off in between events and refocus.

Why did you decide to have a go at European Tour Q-School even though you would have to go through all three stages?

With the Asian Tour and the European Tour having quite a few co-sanctioned events, I figured if I could even have just a little bit of status on the European Tour and get into other co-sanctioned events via the Asian Tour, it just paired up well. Obviously winning made my focus go fully on to the European Tour.



Getting through all three stages must help with confidence?

Definitely. Any time you can get through a Q-School, it's a great feeling because it's usually long and really tough mentally.

How do you find the travelling?

It's not easy but it's something I enjoy – seeing new parts of the world. In the States, there are different cultures,

"Getting through Q-School is a great feeling. It's really tough mentally"

obviously, but it's not like travelling to different countries and seeing different cultures that way.

How have your schedule and goals changed since winning in Mauritius?

Well, it definitely helped with my goal of trying to finish as high up as I can on the Race to Dubai. It opened up opportunities like Abu Dhabi and Dubai, where I don't know if I would have got in if I hadn't won. It will definitely help set up my season this year, which I haven't been able to do before. In Asia I wasn't able to really plan my schedule, but this year I'll be able to plan it properly.

Would the PGA Tour be the ultimate long-term goal?

Yeah, definitely. I like travelling here, but I think everyone wants to get to the PGA Tour. It's the biggest tour out there. I think everyone wants to keep progressing and playing with the best players, and that's kind of what I want to do.

He's most certainly progressing, and pretty rapidly too. Having been ranked outside the world's top 1,000 at the end of 2017, Kitayama is now knocking on the door of that all-important top 100 following his impressive victory in Oman. As confidence, and perhaps consistency, continue to grow, it will be interesting to see how much he goes on to achieve before potentially realising his long-term PGA Tour ambitions.

Ho-sung Choi

One of a kind

Photography: Getty Images

**Ho-sung Choi made quite an impression at the
Pebble Beach Pro-Am. Evin Priest talks to the
South Korean and assesses his impact at the event**





Ho-sung Choi boasts the most unusual swing in golf

It is almost impossible to be considered the biggest celebrity at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am. For the past three years, that title would likely be given to Kelly Slater, Bill Murray and Justin Timberlake – royalty in their own fields. But a 45-year-old South Korean professional golfer who doesn't speak a word of English?

It seems unlikely. Yet there stood Ho-sung Choi on the tee at the par-5 6th at Pebble Beach with a gallery of fans following during Wednesday practice.

Practice day crowds at PGA Tour events are typically exclusive to Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson. But as Choi ripped his drive and performed his famous pirouette during the follow-through, even PGA Tour veteran Charley Hoffman stopped to film 'the fisherman swing'. Within hours of arriving at the course, Choi morphed from internet sensation to the prince of Pebble Beach.

An entrance to remember

In June 2018, Choi's antics went viral on social media when he was contending at the Korean Open. Like a real-life Happy Gilmore, Choi had fans enamoured with his swing, which is quite a lovely action. Well, at least until the follow through when he lifts his right foot off the ground and swings it around his body like a Russian dancer.

The breathtaking move was described by a Japanese journalist as a fisherman casting a rod. But in February this year, Choi cast a spell over a star-studded PGA Tour event in California.

Wearing a sponsor-less hat and a Pebble Beach Pro-Am vest you'd purchase in the merchandise tent, Choi entered the media centre on Wednesday for his pre-tournament press conference like a rockstar. He jogged down the aisle, bowed to reporters, climbed up on stage and answered question after question on his life, golf and his new-found fame.



Choi is also far from conventional when he reaches the putting surface

At one point, Choi stood up and demonstrated how his swing was even more violent when he first took up golf in his late 20s. He pirouetted on one foot. The footwork was magnificent.

Immediately after, Choi walked out to Pebble Beach's front nine for a practice round. Along with a Golf Channel camera crew following his exact whereabouts, he had an entourage of fans and amateur playing partners – as well as *Golf Monthly*. We start off by asking Choi when his global fame first sank in.

"Well, I try not to think about that stuff," Choi says. "But after I nearly won the Korean Open last year, Justin Thomas mentioned he would like to try and swing like me. That's when I realised PGA Tour players in the US actually care about me. It's when I knew my popularity had grown over here."

Right on cue, Hoffman proved that even after 13 seasons on the PGA Tour, golf can still throw up surprises. He filmed from an adjoining fairway. Choi smiled, signed several autographs and continued his walk down the 6th.

A star is born

Only 30 yards from where Tiger Woods hit that famous 7-iron towards the 6th green during his 2000 US Open domination, we ask Choi if he played

any other sports growing up. Before answering, he looks out over Stillwater Cove with a sense of nostalgia. Choi grew up by the sea, in a rural area by the port city of Pohang, South Korea. His father was a farmer and fisherman.

"I actually grew up in the country in the rural areas of South Korea, so I didn't know a lot of sports," Choi recalls. "But I loved swimming; I grew up close to the ocean and in the fields. I helped my mum and dad a lot who worked by the ocean."

Choi, though, was destined to play golf. He was touring a tuna factory in high school when he lost the tip of his right thumb in a freak chainsaw accident. Although he worked jobs in building, mining and delivering

groceries, he landed a part-time job at Anyang Country Club, aged 26. Anyang CC is an upmarket club one hour's drive south of Seoul. It was there his boss insisted he take up golf so he could understand what the members truly needed.

"Whatever they needed me to do," Choi told his press conference of his duties. "From cleaning locker rooms to stocking vending machines. On hot summer days, I would put the ice-cold towels inside the lockers and inside the ice boxes."

His humble beginnings were the reason Choi was so grateful to accept a sponsor's invitation to Pebble Beach – one of the highest-profile celebrity tournaments in world golf. PGA Tour players rub shoulders with actors, athletes and musicians while playing Monterey Peninsula Country Club, Spyglass Hill and Pebble Beach. Choi had never even visited the US before the tournament.

No gimmick

Choi has embraced his notoriety. His swing challenges the idea that to be successful in modern golf, every shot needs to be measured, duplicated and without emotion.

"I feel like I'm more of a feel player, compared with technique," Choi says.



"There are different ways of swinging a golf club. Some people are more flexible and some are stronger than others. It's what makes golf so fun."

Essentially, Choi is a brand. He has created a logo (a graphic of his unique follow through), which was emblazoned on the stand bag he used during the Wednesday practice round, as well as on the headcovers of his TaylorMade woods. But he doesn't want to be a gimmick. He wants to be known for more than his quirky swing, according to translator Paul Whang, who was hired as an interpreter between Choi and the fans for the week. Having spent each day with Choi, Whang says he is hungry to be taken seriously as a professional golfer.

And he should be. He has won on various tours across Asia: twice on the Korean Tour and twice on the Japan Golf Tour. Choi's latest win on the latter circuit came at the Casio World Open in November last year, when he defeated Australia's Brendan Jones by one shot. Jones has 14 wins and has earned more than one billion yen on the Japan Golf Tour during an 18-year career.

Talk of the town

At world No.209, Choi has a better ranking than established names such as Soren Kjeldsen, former US Open winner Graeme McDowell and Andrew 'Beef' Johnston, who have combined to win 15 titles on the European Tour.

But what do the world's best golfers really think of Choi? For 12-time PGA Tour winner and former World No.1 Jason Day, Choi's swing is something

the Australian admits he could never dream of pulling off.

"It takes a special kind of talent to hit balls like he does," he says. "I could never do that, because I'd probably top and shank them. He does it so naturally; it's a gift. I heard they call it the 'fisherman swing' and I know he's become a bit of a sensation. But he has performed well in Asia and if there was someone who was deserving of an invitation to Pebble Beach, it was probably him."

England's World No.13 Tommy Fleetwood insists Choi is technically sound until after impact.

"And that's the important bit," says the smooth-swinging Lancastrian. "I actually think it's a good swing. About

self when asked about Choi at Torrey Pines in January. The Northern Irishman has gained enormous respect for his straightforward answers, and didn't pull any punches when commenting on Choi's sponsor's invitation. "Whether that means he should be taking a spot away from a PGA Tour player, I'm not so sure," he said.

However, Adam Scott – also highly regarded for his thoughtful opinions – offered a contrasting opinion to McIlroy. "I don't necessarily agree with Rory," Scott admits. "[Choi] is another storyline... that's why sponsor's invitations exist; they are free to give them to whomever they want and they should attract some headlines,

otherwise what's the point? Whether it's Ho-sung Choi or a young phenom, I have no problem with it."

Going to California

Choi did not perform well during competition at Pebble Beach. He missed the event's atypical 54-hole cut with rounds of 72, 75 and 77 for a nine-over-par total, but he beat defending champion Ted Potter Jr by three shots and recorded the same score as JB Holmes. Choi, however, undoubtedly added excitement to what was a miserably wet week on the Monterey Peninsula.

The 45-year-old got every inch out of his trip to California. He brought his family. He briefly saw Los Angeles, including Universal Studios. He enjoyed West Coast fast-food favourite In 'N' Out burger. He played in the same group at Pebble Beach as Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers, who had personally requested to be grouped with Choi. Rodgers teamed up with PGA Tour pro Jerry Kelly, while Choi got to partner actor Chris O'Donnell (Robin from Batman Forever).

Most importantly for a sponsor's invitation, Choi was endearing to the fans and fulfilled every media request. Despite the gaggle of celebrities and billionaire CEOs, Choi seemed at home, if anything. And the humble South Korean from seaside Pohang probably was. "Just looking at the ocean and all the scenery out here has been amazing," Choi said. "That's been my favourite part."

Choi was captivated by the wonderful views





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Eddie Pepperell with Jeremy Ellwood

PURE YOUR IRONS

Two-time European Tour winner Eddie Pepperell shares some advice and drills to help you improve your iron play

Iwouldn't say I've ever had a eureka moment when it comes to iron play, but my favourite line comes from Ben Hogan, who said there were two crossroads in the golf swing – the takeaway and the transition. I think that's absolutely true, and for me, the hardest part is the takeaway. When I get that right, it tends to lead to a whole lot of good stuff; when it's off, that's when I find the game really tough. I also think it's hard to get the transition right if the takeaway is wrong.

We all swing it differently, so it's very difficult to give universal remedies. What I would say is that when I've watched amateurs really struggle in Pro-Ams, I've seen some really poor takeaways, and if you don't get the takeaway right then it's a really hard game.

Over the next few pages I'm going to tell you a few things I do to try to remedy things when I'm mis-striking it, with reference to the transition but a real focus on the takeaway, which I believe is the most important element...



1 ARMS FIRST FOR ME

In terms of the ideal sequence of movements, I guess it's different in each player. However, I do think the best ball-strikers tend to have quite a lot in common and I think you can see it a lot in the arms and the arm speed.

I've got out of the habit of watching my swing in slow motion because I believe you lose all sense of rhythm and sequencing when you slow it down like that. It's better to watch it at normal speed, and at distance too, because then you get a better sense of how everything is flowing – and flow is hugely important in the swing.

I like to see my arms moving first in the backswing and first in the downswing too, because that means my body is staying quieter. I get into a lot of trouble when I over-rotate my body early in the backswing and early in the downswing, such that my body is always ahead of my arms.

I much prefer to reverse that pattern, and when I'm playing well, that's what I see. It's what I focus on in practice, and I have a couple of drills to try and help me.



TAKEAWAY



TRANSITION

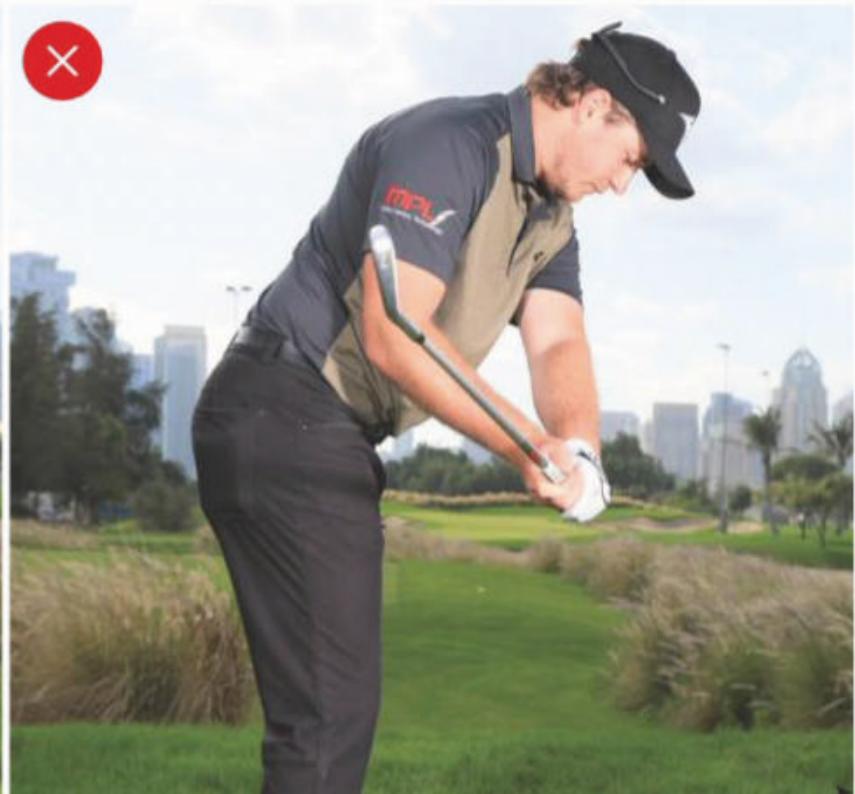
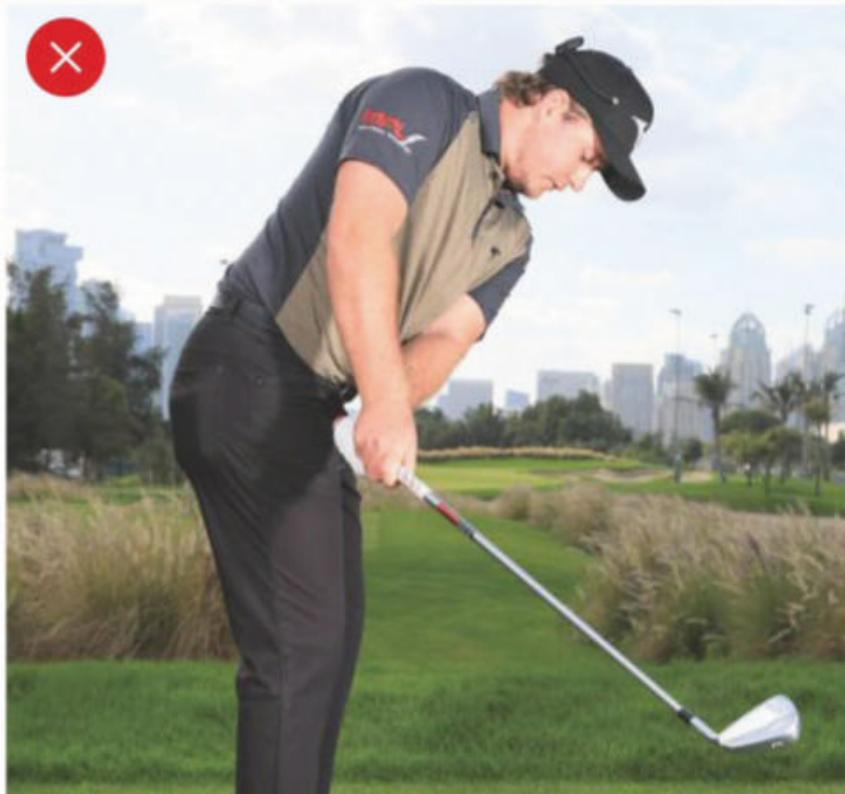
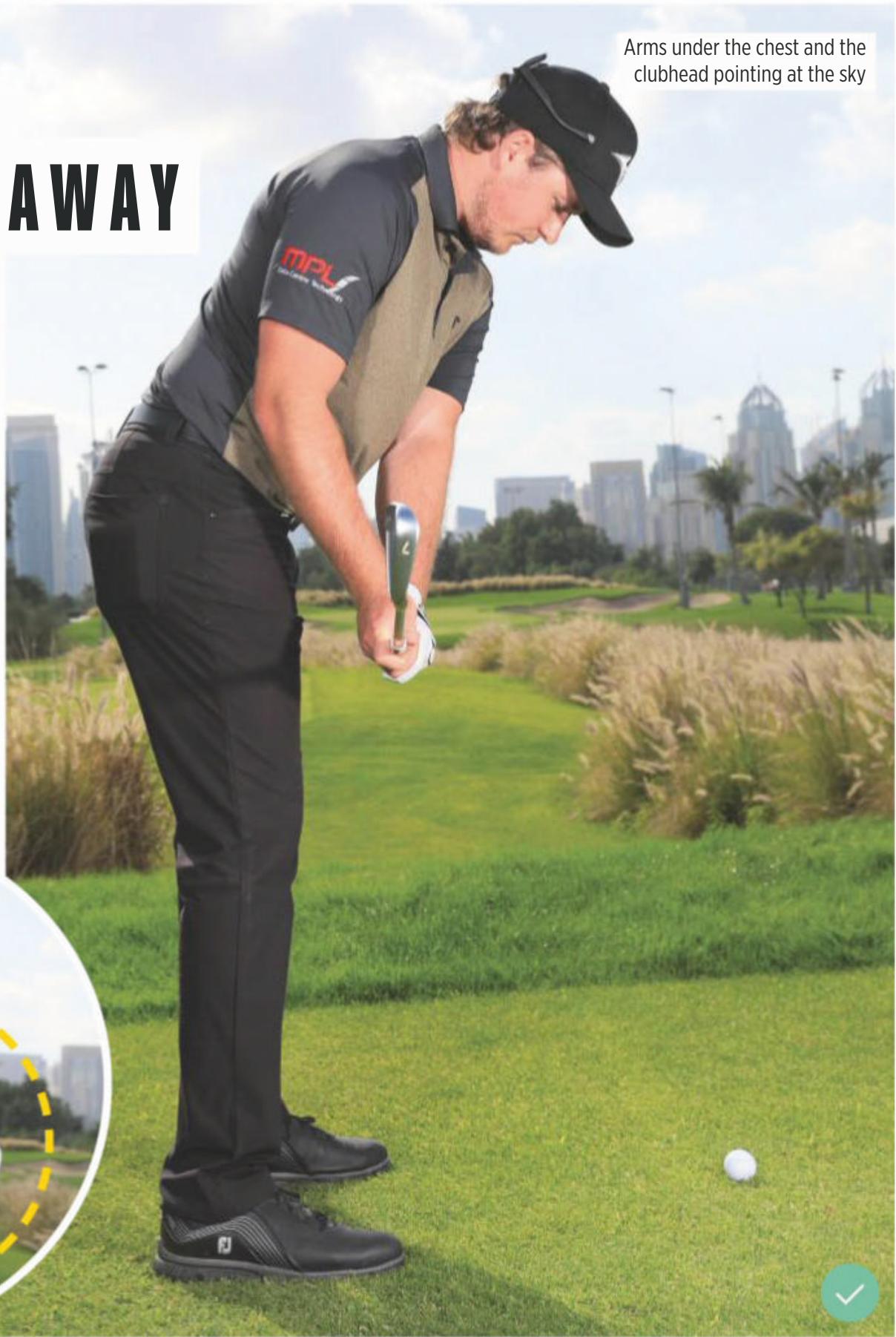
Trouble comes when
the body gets ahead
of the arms

Arms under the chest and the clubhead pointing at the sky

2 KEY TAKEAWAY POSITION

There's a position I like to see in my takeaway that tells me everything is good at a critical point in the swing. When the club is parallel to the ground, I like my arms to be under my chest and I want the clubhead to be pointing up at the sky, if you're looking at me from down the line, as in these photos. I like my left glove and left wrist to be a little bit cupped at this point in the swing, too.

When I've seen these takeaway positions, my ball-striking has been excellent; when I haven't, it has never been right.



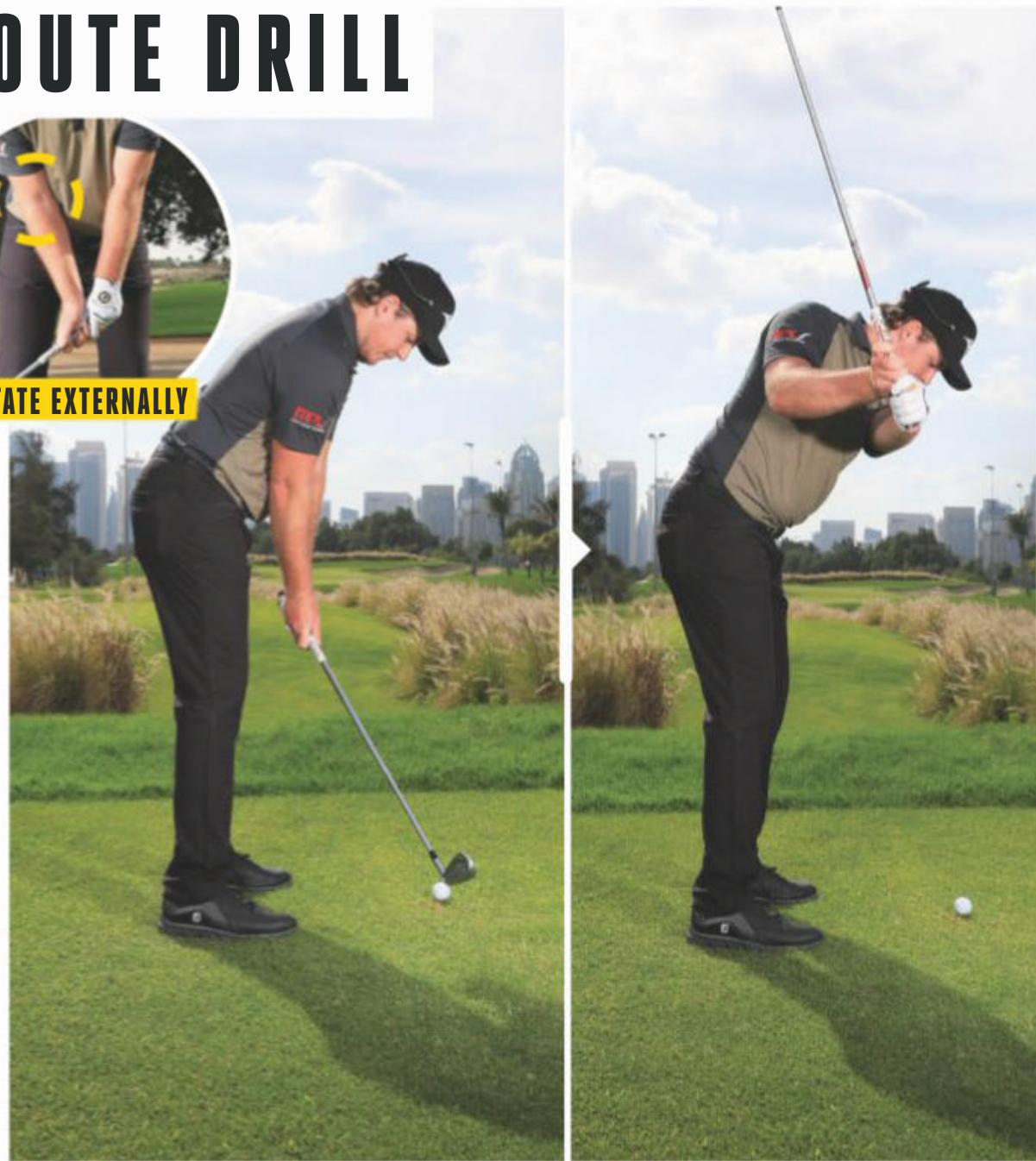
3 MY RE-ROUTE DRILL

The whole idea of this drill is that it encourages an inside path into delivery, which has to happen to be a really good ball-striker. I set the ball so the clubhead is outside it at address and then preset my right forearm by rotating it externally, so the elbow crease always points directly in front of you. If the crease points towards the target, the shoulder is not very well positioned and you're more inclined to get rotation. The preset right arm encourages more of a passive release, which I believe is what you need rather than too much rotation.

From here, I take the club away and then must re-route it on the inside coming down to actually be able to hit the ball. Crucially, I will try to hit fades as this encourages me not just to swing from the inside and flip it with my hands, but rather to rotate my body through the hitting area and stay very passive. If my body goes too quick, I can't possibly get the right shot and result. I came up with this drill a couple of years ago and it gives me good feedback.



ROTATE EXTERNALLY

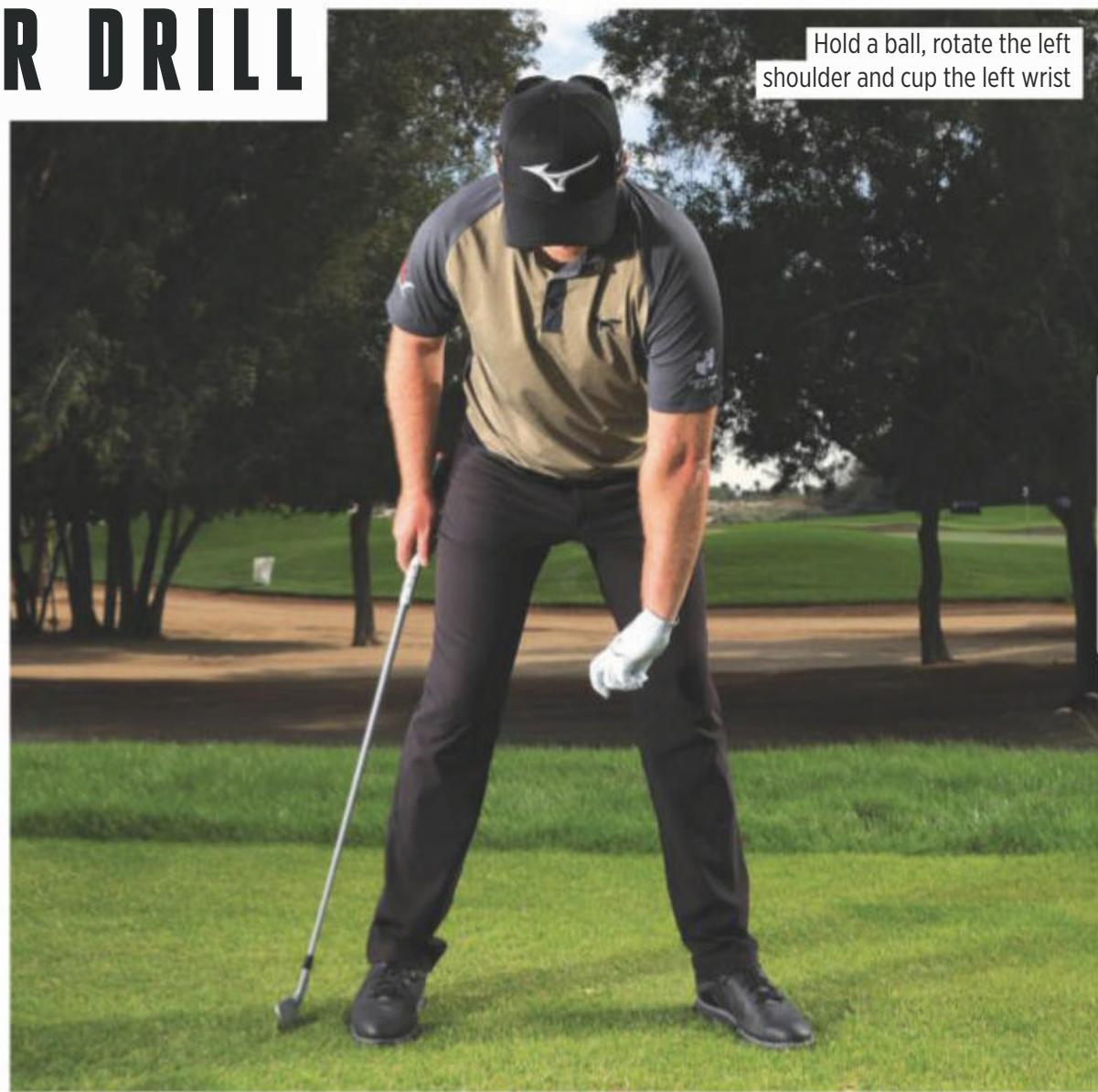


4 SHOULDER DRILL

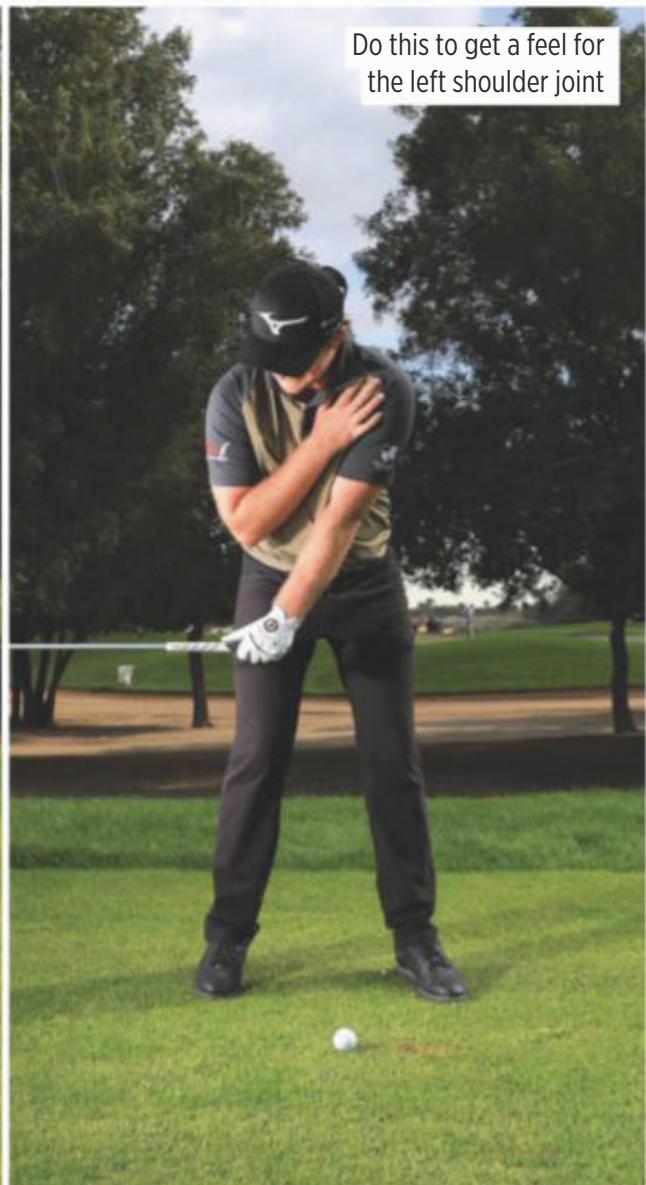
My other favourite drill is designed to give me a strong sense of what my left arm should be doing in the golf swing. I take a ball in my left hand and then internally rotate my left shoulder and cup my left wrist, as in the photo. Then I get into a bent-over posture with straight legs and try and get my posture right. As I say, the idea is to get a real sense of what the left arm needs to do in the swing, so it would stay under my chest initially.

I then work up to a good backswing position and as I start down, I throw the ball down in front of me into the ground. Sometimes I will have a club resting against my leg and at this point will take it up and continue on to impact. Sometimes I do this drill with my right hand on my left shoulder, too, just to get a feel for the left shoulder joint, because you don't want the whole shoulder set-up to move as you take it away – you're just trying to move your left shoulder within its joint.

Hold a ball, rotate the left shoulder and cup the left wrist



To be a great ball-striker you must approach the ball from the inside

**CLUB RE-ROUTES**

LEARNING CURVE

***Golf Monthly* columnist **Dan Walker**
meets European Tour player **Simon
Dyson** to see if he can take his already
impressive game to the next level**

Simon Dyson knows what he's doing on a golf course. He played for nearly 20 years on the European Tour, collecting six tour titles and nearly £10 million in prize money.

In recent seasons, a wrist injury has hindered his chances of a return to the top tier, but the 41-year-old has a new venture which offers the average golfer the chance to tap into his expertise.

Dyson is running the Elite Golf Performance programme from Mottram Hall in Cheshire, and I went along to see what difference it could make to someone who has dropped from 6 to a 2.4 handicap in the last year and is trying to reach the promised land of scratch.

The blurb tells you that EGP is focused on helping wannabe golfers develop their technical and psychological strengths, as well as game-planning and the art of shot-making.

"Get your shorts on" was the text I received from Dyson as I finished the early shift on BBC





Breakfast and headed off to his Cheshire base to have my entire approach to golf analysed. We spent the first hour in the gym, where I discovered that my back is surprisingly far more flexible than I thought.

Golfers spend so much more time with weights and stretch bands in their hands these days, and Dyson is no exception. He has spent years working on balance and control and you can see that every time he swings a club.

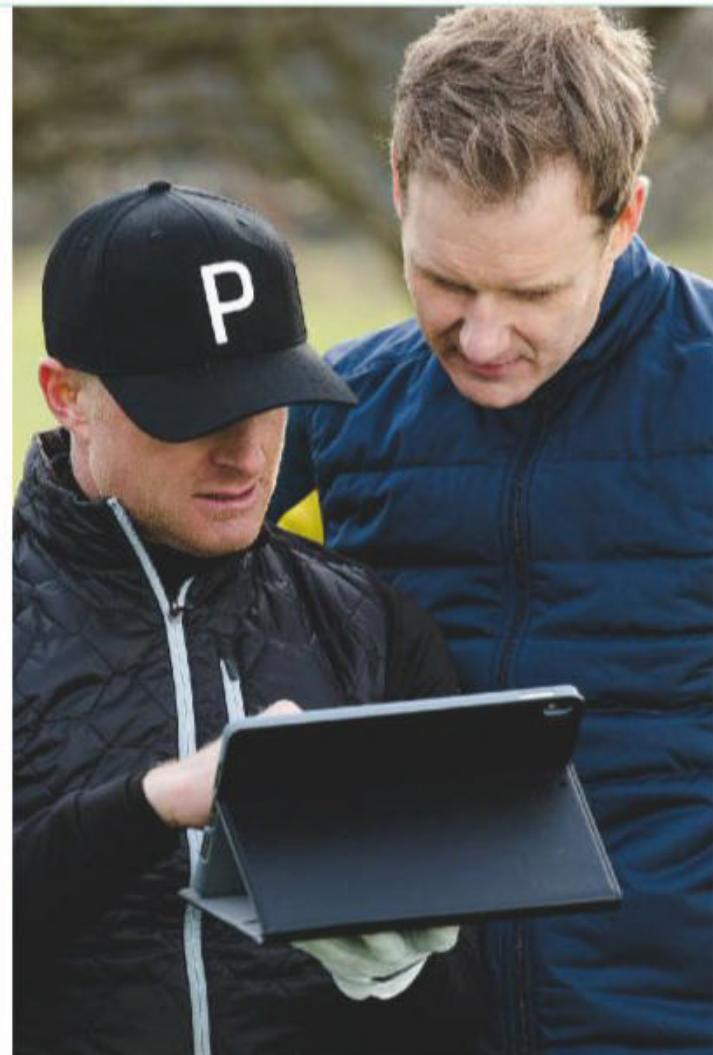
After a series of squats, lunges and single leg jumps, Dyson says the words I've been waiting for: "Let's hit the range then. Time to see your numbers."

That is the crucial thing with his EGP programme – this is all about game analysis over swing analysis. "There are plenty of great swing

"It's quite easy to see where you have room for improvement," smiles Simon. "That's what we'll work on out on the course this afternoon. If we can get you as accurate from 50-100 yards as 100-150, we can make a massive improvement in your game."

All the time Simon is making me think about how I can approach the course to suit my game and maximise my scoring potential. "Why go driver/flick on a short par 4 when, according to your stats, 4-iron/wedge has a much better chance of getting you a birdie and gets you the accuracy off the tee?"

Halfway through our session, Simon gets out some Gravity Fit bands. I've seen loads of pro golfers use these to warm-up and practise and Dyson says it'll help keep my



Simon crunching the numbers

detailed conversations about technique and course management with Ernie Els to one-legged pitching tips from Nick Faldo. It is golfing insight of an incredibly high standard.

I ask him to show me how it's done and, without a warm-up and with only a wedge in his hand, his 100-125 score is a staggeringly accurate +8 handicap equivalent.

"Why aren't you still playing?" I ask him as we head back to the clubhouse for a quick lunch.

"I wouldn't say I'm retiring," he says. "Just taking a step away from competitive golf. I'm never going to say I won't play again because I still love it and miss it. My problem is I haven't been playing very well since my wrist injury and I haven't been enjoying my golf much."

"Over the last few years I've been doing my qualification. I was playing on the Challenge Tour and I learned more while watching golfers and how I can help them. There are so many simple changes most

"My expertise is getting you to understand your game and where you can improve"

coaches out there, but my expertise is getting you to understand your game and where we can improve things," Dyson says.

I am a decent golfer, but there is a strange pressure being watched by someone who was one of the best in the world. I throw in an early shank, but Simon is kind and encouraging and keen to see where my strength lies and where I can improve. Over the course of about 90 minutes we work through every distance from 40 to 150 yards. The TrackMan demands a distance and I have to hit it with the club of my choice.

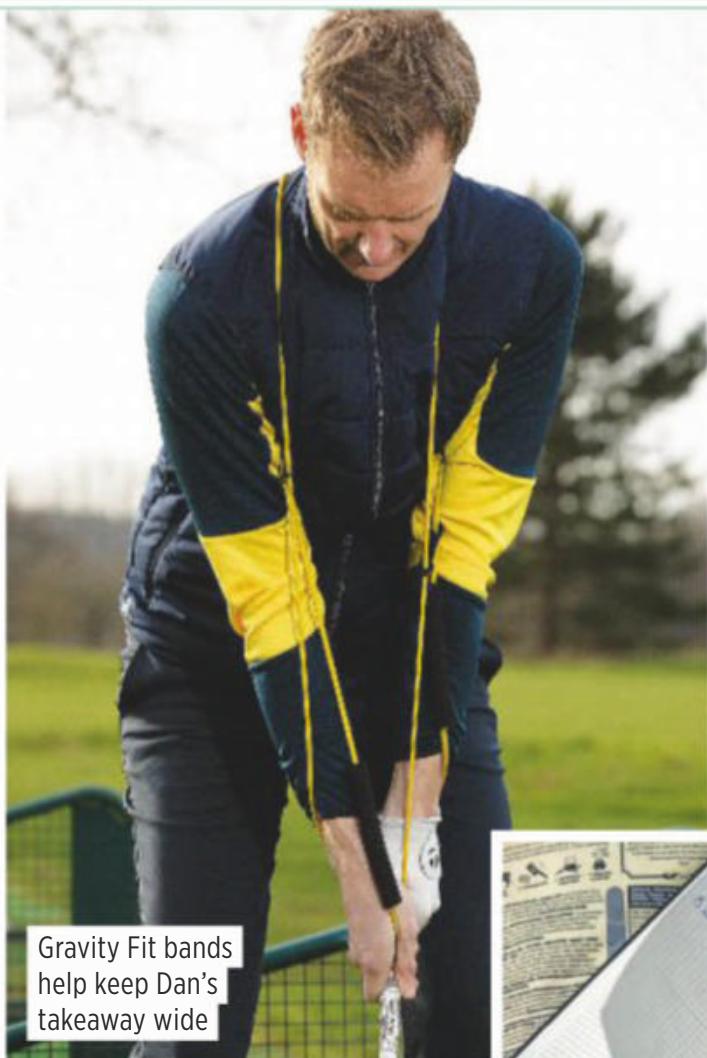
The technology then calculates my average distance from the intended target and gives me a handicap equivalent for each range of distances based on the results of other golfers who have also completed the test. The results were pretty conclusive...

takeaway as wide as possible and also stop my little wrist collapse, which sometimes creeps in at the top of my backswing.

What I found particularly helpful was his ability to talk you through shots and drop in little pieces of information he has hoovered up over the years – everything from



Yards	Handicap
50-75	6
75-100	0
100-125	+3
125-150	+4



Gravity Fit bands help keep Dan's takeaway wide

golfers can use to make a big difference. I really didn't enjoy playing last year and it made me realise I want to do something else. I still love golf and this feels perfect to launch EGP. I've already had loads of interest from unions and county teams who want to tap into my expertise."

We share some sweet potato fries and a salad and then it's out onto the back nine at Mottram Hall to try and put the theory into practice. The 10th hole is a dogleg par 5. "What's your strategy here, Dan?" asks Dyson. "Smash it over the corner with the big dog and try and get there in two." Simon laughs: "It's a 561-yard par 5. With this wind and wet ground you can't reach it in two. Let's go 3-wood to the corner, 5-iron down the centre to leave you a wedge in and a birdie putt." I use two balls, one for each plan. Mine is never seen again, Simon's method yields a tidy par.

"My plan with EGP is to make you fitter, more mobile and an accomplished shot-maker," he tells me as we wander to find his ball in the middle of the fairway. "So many people are very mechanical and I want

to teach the art of thinking through your game and having more than just 'swing' in there. I also want you to appreciate the psychological side of it. Adding all that will make you a very good golfer."

The next 90 minutes is a masterclass in exactly what Dyson is teaching as he posts an error-free six-under-par back nine, giving himself a birdie putt of inside 12 feet on seven different occasions.

I have been working hard on my golf for the past year, but it's clear there is still plenty to be tinkered with. Top players always make things look so comfortable and



Simon leaves no stone unturned

simple and I learned so much just watching Simon talk me through every shot he was hitting.

We get to the short par-4 15th. I'm just looking at a generous fairway, but Dyson is all about narrowing the target for every shot. "Right... 368-yard dogleg left. I'm going to draw a 4-iron off the rake in that fairway trap and leave myself about 110 to the flag, one of my favourite distances." He was a little wayward. He left himself 112 instead of 110 and another perfect approach produced another birdie and an early handshake.

I played solidly, but I made at least three bad decisions in those

nine holes and two of those cost me shots. Thinking about that narrow focus has really helped me since meeting Simon. I am now aiming at individual branches on trees rather than fairways and my putting feels a lot more relaxed and accurate because I trust my stroke if I happen to miss.

I'll definitely be back to see him later this year to have another tinker and see if I can improve on those scores. Golf continues to be an incredibly complicated beast which I will never fully conquer, but the day with Dyson has given me a really clear idea of my strengths and weaknesses and simple changes I can make to give myself a better chance of handing in a decent scorecard.

Dyson has a lot of magical memories from a career that made him one of Europe's top golfers for a decade. He twice finished in Europe's top ten, was a regular at The Open Championship and also played in five USPGAs, tying 6th behind Tiger Woods at Southern Hills in 2007. He played in four US Opens and had two trips to Augusta for The Masters in 2010 and 2012.

"This is a new chapter for me and it really feels like the right time to do it. I get a real boost from seeing people improve and will hopefully get the chance to expand this programme if we are successful."

I left by suggesting Dyson launches a YouTube channel called 'Simon Says'. I'm not sure he'll go for it, but my first experience of EGP has taught me that when this Simon says, it's best to listen.

- You can find Simon on Twitter at @simondyson77 or enquiry@elitegolfperformance.co.uk



SWING SEQUENCE

BRANDEN GRACE

ANALYSIS BY BARNEY PUTTICK



Branden Grace is a graduate from the Ernie Els and Fancourt Foundation and much of this swing is really classic. But at address, note how low his tee height is with a driver, and how he favours the ball position several inches back of what would be considered standard. Conventional

teaching would be to have half the ball above the crown, and the ball near the left instep, but he's found what works for him – the moral here is don't be afraid to experiment to find your best positions!

If you read up on Branden, he talks about being a low hitter and using utility long-irons to help get the ball flighted, so it's no surprise

WANT TO SEE MORE?



For a whole host of tour pro swing videos, check out golf-monthly.co.uk/videos

he had that Major-record 62 in the 2017 Open Championship.

There's nothing else quirky at address. The spine tilt is good and the shaft is on plane halfway back. There's nothing unconventional in the backswing, either – it's a shoulder-driven first movement and perfectly on plane. Mechanically this is a very solid golf swing.

BRANDEN
GRACE
THE STATS

302.6

Driving distance (yards)

67.7%

Greens in regulation

70.60

Stroke average

57.6%

Scrambling

A great first
movement downA balanced
follow through

Photography: Getty Images

In the first move down in photo four, where he's shallowing out on the plane with the club behind him, there's no question of him coming over the top and this is a great move for readers to emulate. The fifth photo is great, too, showing good extension, and you can see how his shoulders are turning with the right shoulder

staying low through the ball, rather than popping up and out. There's then a poised, balanced finish up over the shoulders – he's obviously quite a supple guy.

He's played the last three Presidents Cups, and if you're in the top dozen international players on the circuit, that's a very high standard. He may be worth a

little flutter at Portrush as he's got that low flight, he shot that Open record score and he's had several top-six finishes in Majors. Like Louis Oosthuizen, you can imagine him getting his tail up in an Open, and he's also now got a Major-winning caddie in Craig Connelly, which I think is a statement of intent.

**TOP
25
COACH**



Barney Puttick
PGA teaching
professional,
Mid-Herts
Golf Club

MY IRON-PLAY SECRETS

BY JASON DAY

Day and his long-time coach Colin Swatton share their plan to improve his shot-shaping

There is an obvious reason why Jason Day has won 12 times on the PGA Tour. "Jason is the best chipper and putter on the planet," Colin Swatton, Day's long-time coach, says. Quite simply, he is a magician from close range and on the putting surface. When he combines that with solid driving, he is a formidable force.

But there is a frontier Day and Swatton know that, if conquered, could yield another period like 2015 and 2016, when he won the USPGA and seven other events.

"Improving Jason's iron play will take him to the next level," Swatton says. "Jason has all the tools to be a really good iron player, but we need to work on commitment to each approach shot." Along with commitment, Day and Swatton have targeted the shaping of iron shots in both directions as a key area.

"Having a better understanding of the mechanics and feel for shaping the ball is going to get me closer to flags on tour," Day adds.

The end goal

"We have targeted my iron play as an area I could make up ground on the PGA Tour," Day says. "We are trying to get my left-to-right path to where I like it. If it's between three and five degrees left, I'm going to hit a nice, controlled fade. Along with the draw, I'm trying to exaggerate angles on both sides to make it easier to curve the ball."

"I know that if I'm first in Strokes Gained: Putting, hit 70 per cent of greens in regulation and 60 to 65 per cent of fairways, I'm capable of winning multiple times this year."

But how can you learn from Day's practice regime? Both high- and low-handicappers will find these checkpoints useful...

The cannon

Day says: "When I was kid and 'Swatto' was teaching me how to shape the ball, he would always talk about 'the cannon' and 'the face' as weapons you need to shape shots. Your cannon is the combination of your feet, shoulders and arms."

Old-school feedback

Day says: "Being able to call on a fade or draw requires a lot of practice. Amateurs may not have access to TrackMan and other gadgets we use on tour, but they can do what I used to do on the range as a junior.

"Insert an alignment stick in the ground vertically between you and your target. The most important aspect of shaping the ball is knowing your starting point. Obviously, right-handers don't want to see a fade start right of the vertical rod. You should practise shaping the ball with something that will give you feedback."

Day won the USPGA in 2015



Set the face

Swatton says: "If you are a higher handicapper, you should start out by practising with the clubface set open or closed at address. Jason would say the most important swing thought here is trying to create the feel in the hands and the body for both shot shapes.

"But to teach your hands those feels requires steps. First, learn the fundamentals. For a draw, you need to aim your cannon to the right of the target, and the face needs to be pointing left relative to the feet line at impact. It's the opposite for a fade."

Advanced class

Day says: "If you're a good ball-striker, you should develop varying degrees of fade and draw shots. It is actually easier than it sounds, because it's nothing more than adjustments in the set-up position. Want a big fade? Aim further left of your alignment rod, open the clubface more and swing along your feet line."

Swatton says: "For a baby fade, you're just dumbing all that down. I would encourage better players to practise feeling like they are holding that face angle open [for fades] or closing it slightly [for draws] through the impact zone."

Rehearse

Day says: "A lot of amateurs go on the range and hit full shots to the same target for 20 minutes. I think the most useful thing pre-round is to put an alignment rod at your feet and work on a few shots."

"What does a draw feel like today? What does a fade feel like today? Once you're on the course and the situation calls on you to hit the shots, you'll know exactly what you need to do. It will be recreating a recent feeling."



DAY'S
PGA TOUR
HEYDAY
IN NUMBERS

2015

3rd off the tee
25th on approaches
18th around the green
6th putting

2016

62nd off the tee
33rd on approaches
12th around the green
1st putting

Day is on a mission to improve his iron play

FAULT FIXER

MORE POWER

These tips and drills will help you gain some extra yards off the tee

1

Think 4:2:1

Power comes mostly, though not entirely, from the body, where a key requirement is a good turn with lots of resistance. But how much should each part turn? I think a 4:2:1 ratio is ideal, so, for example, the shoulders turn 90°, the hips 45° and the legs and knees 22.5°. Those are your key flex points for an ideal mix of rotation, resistance and stability to get everything loaded and ready to go. Some would say the hips should turn less but I think better ball-strikers typically have slightly more hip turn.

The 'lead out' with the hips is then key at the start of the downswing as that creates shoulder speed, which leads to 20% of clubhead speed. If you can't 'lead out' well, you will lose sequence and power.



Power comes mostly from the body



2

Custom fitting

If you walked into your pro shop and bought a new driver that gave you 50 more yards, that could only mean one of two things – an illegal club or an existing driver spec completely ill-suited to your golf swing!

Okay, it almost certainly won't be 50-yard gains, but many golfers could produce some extra speed, power and distance by having a custom fitting and walking away with something perfectly tailored to their individual launch characteristics. The right shaft could help you generate more power from your existing swing.



A custom fitting is a must

TOP
25
COACH



Clive Tucker
Mannings
Heath GC, West
Sussex

3

The big toe

You create resistance through the trail foot, too, which helps control hip turn. There are three pressure points under your foot that allow you to 'kick off', and the main one is the big toe. If it lifts on the backswing you won't be able to initiate an efficient motion consistently.

Keep your big toe on the ground and retain some flex in your right knee on the backswing to create that little bit of 'braced-ness' you need to give your hips something to resist against. A good way to encourage this is to place something under the outside of your right foot as you swing – a headcover, shaft or perhaps a club, as I have here. See how much more powerful it looks with the club under my foot.

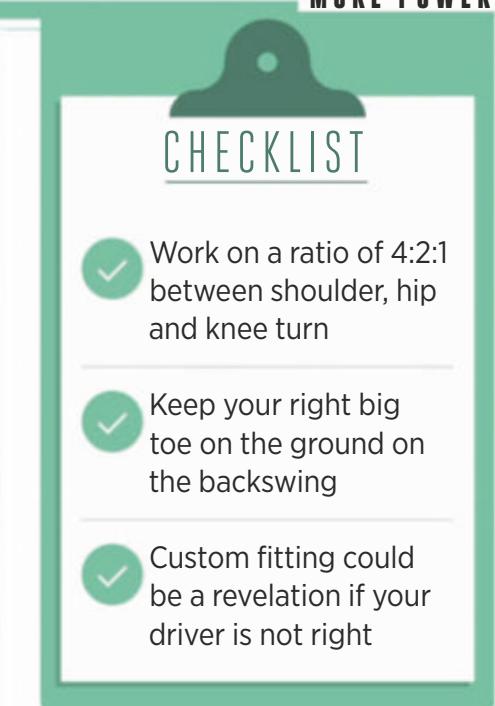


MANNINGS HEATH
GOLF CLUB & WINE ESTATE

Shot on location at Mannings Heath Golf & Wine Estate, West Sussex



A far more
powerful position



If you cast early,
you'll throw the
ball into the ground



4

Anti-casting drill

A lot of people lose energy because they dump it too fast by casting the club early in the downswing. This drill can help. Hold a ball loosely between the thumb and palm of your right hand. Set yourself up, then bend your wrist backwards to move your elbow slightly inwards at address. Your task is to throw the ball towards your target and land it on the target line. If you cast early, you'll throw the ball into the ground before you get to impact.

SCORING ZONE THE HALF PITCH

Master this shot to add greater control to your game in the scoring zone

1 What is a half-pitch?

It's important to clarify that when I'm talking about a half-pitch, I'm not talking about a shot that goes half the distance of a full pitching wedge – I'm talking about a swing position. My half-pitch with a pitching wedge goes 105 yards, but my full pitching wedge doesn't go 210 yards! For me, the 'half' is about left-arm position in the backswing. On a full swing with a wedge, that might be near vertical to the ground at the top; in my half-pitch swing, my backswing would finish when my left arm is parallel to the ground.



2 Why play the half-pitch?

People should play more half-pitches because once you've grasped it, you've got more control when you're only swinging that far back. I think a lot of people actually do play half-pitches when they think they're trying to make a full swing with a wedge, perhaps because they've come to realise they get more control that way. If you talk to tour pros, nearly all of them will tell you that they rarely hit any of their wedges flat-out because they know that spin and distance are so much harder to control then.

**TOP
25
COACH**



Peter Finch
Quest Golf Academy,
Burnley

3

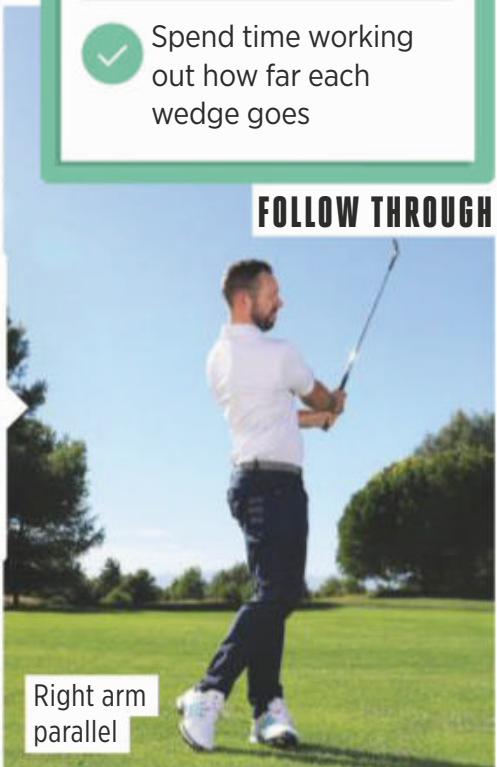
How do you play the half-pitch?

Set your body at address to simulate impact, so feet slightly open, hips slightly open and perhaps shoulders slightly open too. Then swing the club away until the left arm is parallel with the ground, allowing your wrists to naturally hinge a decent amount because

Feet, hips and shoulders are open

you'll be relying on the subsequent wrist release to generate speed.

At the end of your backswing, you kind of want the club pointing at the sky, then it's a matter of trying to almost recreate your set-up position through the ball. Follow through until your right arm is parallel to the ground in a mirror image of the backswing.

**CHECKLIST**

- ✓ Remember, 'half' refers to swing positions, not shot distances

- ✓ Left arm to parallel on backswing; right arm on follow through

- ✓ Spend time working out how far each wedge goes



WANT TO SEE MORE?



For more pitching advice, visit golf-monthly.co.uk/videos

Common mistakes

The most common mistakes would be trying to help the ball up in the air and scooping at it, and trying to fit the speed of the swing, rather than the length of the swing, to the shot - both acceleration and deceleration. People might not swing back far enough, think "this swing is too short", then accelerate too much into the ball. Or they might swing back too far and then decelerate.

A lot of that comes from simply not knowing how far you hit your wedges, so spend time with a rangefinder working out how far the ball goes with different wedges and different swings. This will take uncertainty out of the equation and you'll make more confident swings as a result.



Shot on location at Lumine Mediterranea Beach & Golf Community, Spain

STRATEGY THE HYBRID OPTION

Boost your greenside skills by learning an alternative way to 'chip'

1 Assess the shot

Using a hybrid around the greens is a great skill to have, especially when you find yourself up against the fringe. There are other scenarios, too, that may call for this alternative option, where it makes more sense to get the ball running. Tour pros usually reach for a wedge because this allows them to impart more spin.

In this case, we have a lot of green to work with and the hybrid is a sensible option, even more so if you've been struggling with your wedges. The danger is coming over the fringe, which makes a solid contact crucial.



A solid contact is crucial



With a lot of green to work with, a hybrid is a good choice

2 Grip check

This isn't likely to be your normal hybrid grip. We're looking to reduce forearm rotation through impact, so grip the club a little more in the palm of the hand so it runs more up the forearm. This will also reduce unwanted wrist action and encourage you to hit the shot more like a putt.

WANT TO SEE MORE?



For more strategy tips, visit golf-monthly.co.uk/videos





CHECKLIST

Grip the club more in the palm rather than the fingers

Stand a bit closer than you would for a 'normal' chip

Try and achieve a more downward angle of attack



3 Set-up basics

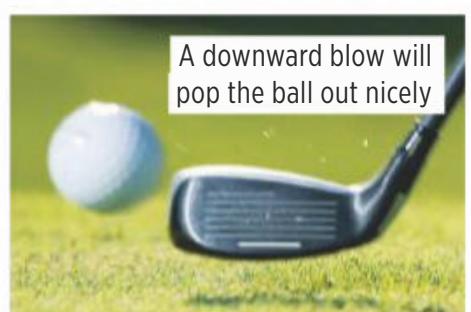
That solid contact I mention comes with the correct set-up. A narrow stance helps to get the ball rolling. Be mindful of how close you're standing to the ball.

Quite often I see players standing too far away; this creates a more rounded arc to the swing, which means it's harder to time the low point at impact. Stand a bit closer than you would for a 'normal' chip to achieve a more consistent contact. As for weight distribution, favour slightly more on the lead side.



4 Angle of attack

A narrow stance also helps raise the centre of gravity slightly in the body to achieve a more downward angle of attack. We're looking to get the handle and weight ahead of the ball.



Shot on location at Lumine Mediterranea Beach & Golf Community, Spain

TOP 25 COACH



Alistair
Davies

PGA
Professional,
Marriott Forest
of Arden,
Warwickshire
alistairdavies
golf.com



10 BEST TIPS

RYAN FOX

The big-hitting Kiwi may be renowned for his power, but he's got tips and advice from tee to green to help you improve in all areas



1 Chipping

Pick a spot two yards on the green and work out what club will hit that point. The shorter the distance you have to fly a chip, the easier it is to hit that target. If you're on the edge of the green trying to lob the ball half way, you might end up 30 feet away if you mess it up. It's much easier to fly it a couple of yards with a 7-iron and run it out.

2 Reading greens

Look at it from more than one angle. I start behind the hole then walk around the low side to get an overall picture. From the low side you often get a good idea of speed and where the apex is.

3 Better ball-striking

Ball-striking is purely rhythm for me. A lot of amateurs are too quick at the start and in the transition. You want speed to build through impact, so focus on a slow takeaway and letting the club drop down from the top, rather than snatching it down.

4 Beating a slice

Most golfers aim further left and end up cutting across it more. Drop your right foot back and feel like you're trying to hit a big hook from the inside. It might feel weird effectively aiming right to conquer a slice, but it will straighten your swing path out.

5 Course management

Keep the ball under the hole as much as possible. Airmailing greens is a big no! Even if you're short of the green, chipping and putting up the hill is often easier than being 30 feet past the flag.

6 How to practise

Go through your full routine – be very specific, always pick a target, always pick a shot and vary it. Hitting ten wedges in a row doesn't make you better, but hitting wedge, 8-iron then driver (as you do on the course) and being precise with your targets and shots, does.

Fox is one of the biggest hitters in world golf

7 Holing out from three feet

That's a target-based thing. Focus on a spot at the back of the hole – anything that catches your eye and the smallest target possible. This will take your mind away from the 'what ifs'.

8 Increasing power

I'd go back to rhythm. People think to hit it harder you've got to hit it faster. You do, but you've got to swing it faster through impact, not faster from the top. When they try to hit it hard, many people snatch the club away then snatch it back down again. You lose power that way.

9 Bunker play

Make sure you have the clubface open so you can use the bounce to stop the club from digging in. With the clubface open, you can hit the sand really hard, looking to strike it two inches behind the ball.

10 Create more wedge spin

The three main things are a good lie, decent wedges and clean grooves. Then it's all about contact. You need to be hitting down on the ball – if you're coming in shallow, it's really hard to spin the ball. Hitting down gets it rolling up the face and generates spin.

WHAT'S IN THE BAG?



► **Driver:** Srixon Z 785

► **3-wood:** Callaway Epic Flash, 16°

► **Utility iron:** Srixon Z U85, 20°

► **Irons:** Srixon Z 785 (4-PW)

► **Wedges:** Cleveland RTX 4, 51°, 56° and 60°

► **Putter:** TaylorMade Spider Tour

► **Golf ball:** Srixon Z-Star XV

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Rules



DROPPING

Danny Sommerville, R&A Rules manager, discusses the new knee-height drop,

one of the headline changes to the 2019 Rules of Golf.

So, what happens if you forget and don't drop the ball from knee height? Rickie Fowler was quick to learn the ramifications of this at the WGC event in Mexico. After shanking his ball out of bounds, Fowler proceeded to drop a ball under stroke and distance, but did so from shoulder height. This went unnoticed by Fowler and his caddie before he went on to play the ball.

Had he realised his error, he could have corrected the mistake by dropping the ball again in the right way before playing it. But as he had already played the ball from within the relief area, he was penalised one stroke.

Words: Danny Sommerville Photography: Getty Images, Kenny Smith

So why has the height changed? In the old Rules, there were nine situations that could have resulted in you having to re-drop the ball. Trying to remember all these situations in the heat of the moment often resulted in a lot of misunderstanding on when to re-drop the ball.

Now, by dropping from a lower height, the ball rolls less, helping the player to get it into play within the relief area much quicker. The ball simply needs to be dropped in, and come to rest in, the relief area. The ball should be re-dropped if it comes to rest outside the one or two club-length relief area, making it simpler for players.

The ball must be dropped by letting it go at knee height, falling straight down without touching the player or their equipment before touching the ground. The ball does



Dropping essentials:

- The ball must be dropped from the height of your knee in a standing position
- You do not have to be standing upright to drop the ball as long as it is from knee height
- If you drop from shoulder height but correct your error before playing, there is no penalty

not have to be dropped to the side of the player – it can be dropped in front, too. Knee height means the height of your knee when in a standing position, but this does not mean that your knee has to be upright or straight when dropping the ball. You can choose whichever way you find comfortable, as long as it is from knee height and the ball lands in, and is played from within, the relief area.

Branden Grace chose a slightly different way to drop a ball when taking relief during the Waste Management Phoenix Open in Scottsdale, Arizona. His drop came under scrutiny as many believed it to be wrong. However, Grace, although bending down with one knee on the ground, did in fact drop the ball from a height that equated to his knee height – a permissible drop under the Rules.

Branden Grace finds a different way to drop from knee height

YOUR QUERIES RESOLVED

Q I know that under the Rules of Golf, worm casts are classed as loose impediments, and in summer when they have dried this makes sense. But in winter, worm casts tend to be wet and sticky. Is it still permissible to remove such casts, or would they be deemed to be

'solidly embedded' and therefore not a loose impediment?

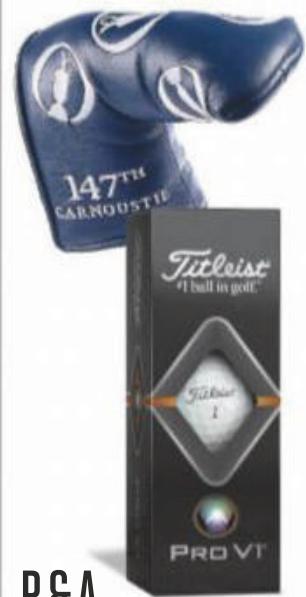
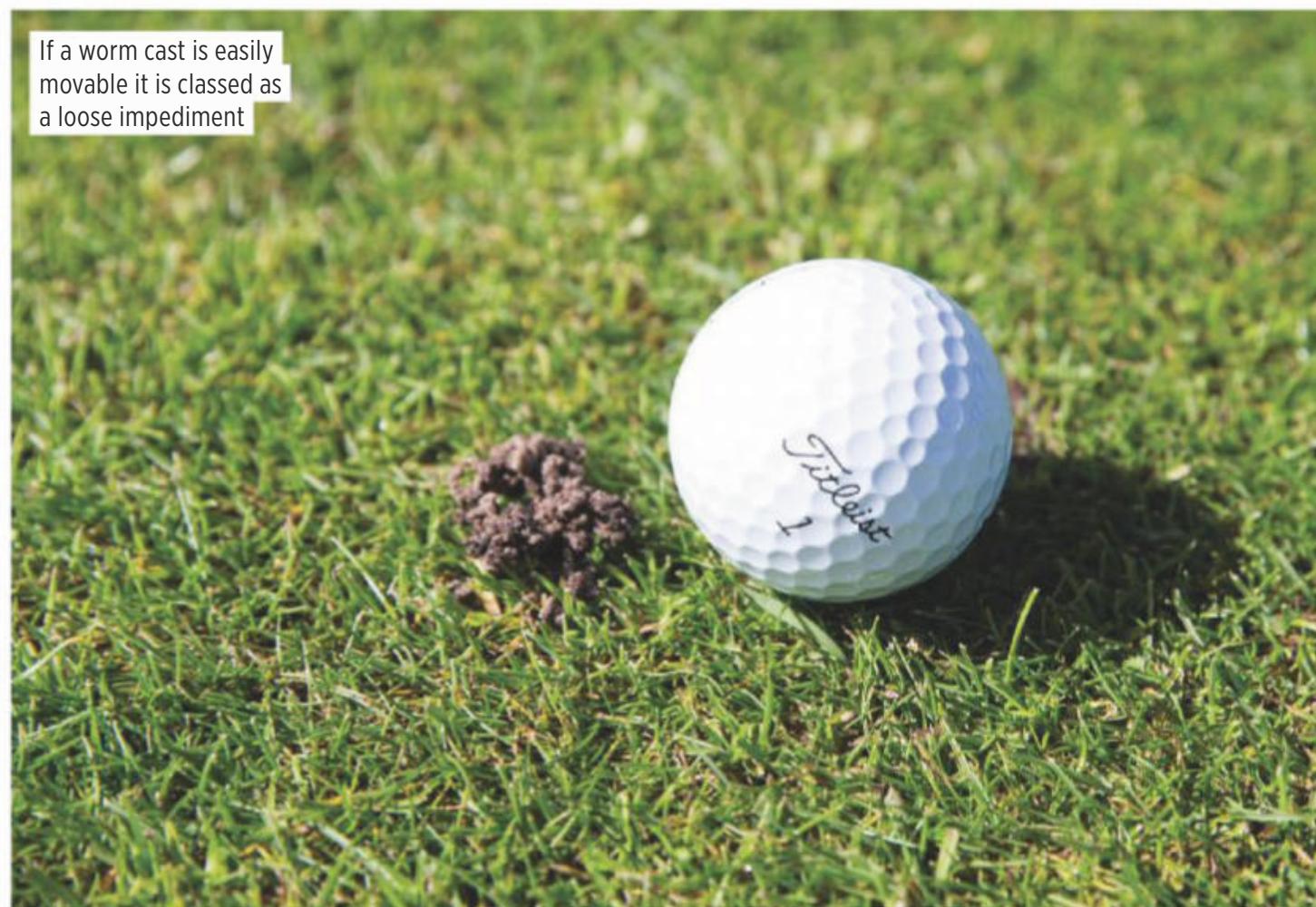
Martin Cunningham, Sidcup, Kent

A If the worm cast is easily movable it maintains its status as a loose impediment, but if it is solidly attached to the ground it must not

be removed. You must also be careful when removing a loose impediment, as if your ball moves in the process, you must replace it on the original spot and add one penalty stroke to your score under Rule 9.4b.

Danny Sommerville

R&A Rules manager



R&A WINNERS

Each month, the readers whose queries are featured will receive an Open Championship putter cover plus a sleeve of three R&A logo Titleist Pro V1 golf balls

Q If you hit your ball into a stream marked with red stakes, I understand the general options and also that the option of going to the other side (equidistant) is no longer available under the new Rules. On a dogleg-left hole with a penalty area on the right side, if you choose to go back on a line from the pin to where the ball last crossed the penalty area margin, and this takes you across the red penalty area to the other side, is this allowed, even though you are then crossing to the other side of the red-staked penalty area?

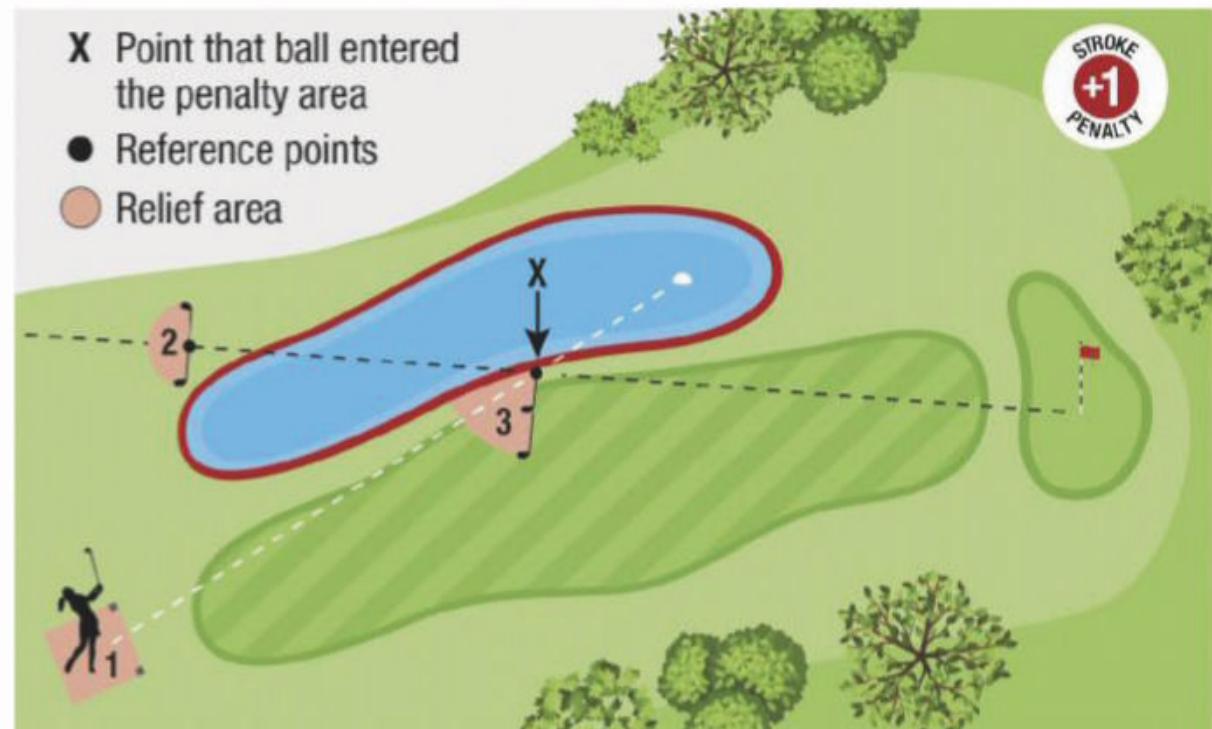
jusme, GM website forum

may measure across it. However, any part of the penalty area within the two club lengths (lateral) as measured from the reference point is not part of the relief area and the player may not drop the ball

there or in another part of the penalty area when taking back-on-a-line relief (Rule 17.1d & Int. 17.1d(3)/1).

Danny Sommerville

R&A Rules manager



A Yes, when taking the back-on-a-line option you may cross over part of a penalty area, which is also permissible when taking the lateral relief option (red penalty area only). In this scenario, you

RULES EVERY GOLFER SHOULD KNOW

Bunkers – Rule 12 and others

0ne or two things have changed with regard to what you can do in bunkers from 2019, but before we venture into those, it's worth noting that bunkers have been separated out from the hazards of old (now penalty areas) in the Rule book and have their own Rule – Rule 12.

You are now able to touch or move loose impediments in bunkers and there is less chance of being penalised if you touch the sand with your hand or club, although there are still restrictions that you need to be aware of in the bunker.

Among the things deemed okay are: smoothing the bunker to care for the course; placing clubs or other equipment in the bunker (perhaps on a course with vast bunkers where you might not be quite sure which club you're going to use); measuring, marking, lifting, replacing or taking other actions under a Rule; leaning on a

club to rest, stay balanced or prevent a fall; and even now striking the sand in frustration or anger after a poor shot.

However, if you do anything to improve the conditions affecting your next stroke, you will get the general penalty – two strokes in stroke play and loss of hole in match play. And before we all get a little carried away thinking we have carte blanche permission to touch the sand whenever, these four important prohibitions still remain: you can't do anything that tests the condition of the sand; you can't take a practice swing in a bunker; you can't touch sand immediately in front of or behind the ball; and you still can't touch the sand on the backswing for the stroke.

It's also worth stressing that although you may now remove loose impediments such as twigs, stones and pine cones from bunkers, there will still be a penalty if your ball moves in the process of removing them, so if it's lodged against a stick on the upslope, you're still going to have

to take your chances with a 'stick then ball' contact!

The other main change is that if you choose to take an unplayable in a bunker under Rule 19.3, you now have a fourth option that was previously unavailable. The only way to drop outside the bunker previously was to take the stroke and distance option and go back to where you last played from. Now there is an additional option allowing you to drop back on the line outside the bunker, but it will cost you an extra penalty stroke compared with dropping back on line in the bunker – two strokes as opposed to one. The options to drop back on the line in the bunker or within two club-lengths for a one-stroke penalty remain.

This new option might just be useful for those not entirely proficient from steep-faced bunkers, or who fear the ball may plug if dropped in the sand and don't fancy replaying the shot they've just hit. Yes, it will cost an extra penalty stroke, but it is at least now an option.

There are now four options if you choose to take an unplayable



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1

In stroke play, Jezz lifts his ball when it is resting against the flagstick. Part of the ball was below the surface, but not all of it. What is the ruling?



- A.** There is no penalty and the ball is holed.
- B.** Jezz gets a one-stroke penalty and must replace the ball.
- C.** Jezz gets a one-stroke penalty and the ball is holed.

2

In stroke play, Jezz marks and lifts his ball for identification without announcing his intention to his marker. What is the ruling?



- A.** There is no penalty.
- B.** Jezz gets a one-stroke penalty.
- C.** Jezz gets the general penalty.

3

In stroke play, while playing the 8th hole, Fergus hit his ball onto the 9th tee and removes a tee marker before playing his shot onto the green. What is the ruling?



- A** There is no penalty.
- B** Fergus is disqualified.
- C** Fergus gets the general penalty.

4

In stroke play, Jezz strikes the sand in anger near his ball which improves the area of his stance. What is the ruling?



- A** There is no penalty.
- B** Jezz gets a one-stroke penalty.
- C** Jezz gets the general penalty.

QUIZ ANSWERS

Quiz answers: **1. A** – There is no penalty and the ball is holed. There is a special case when the ball is resting against the flagstick. The ball is treated as holed if any part of the ball is below the surface of the putting green (Rule 13.2c). **2. A** – There is no penalty. There is no requirement to announce your intention to identify your ball to a marker or anyone else (Rule 7.3). **3. A** – There is no penalty. Tee markers on other holes are movable obstructions that may be removed as allowed in Rule 15.2 (Rule 6.2(4)). **4. C** – Jezz gets the general penalty for improving the area of his intended stance (Rule 8.1a).

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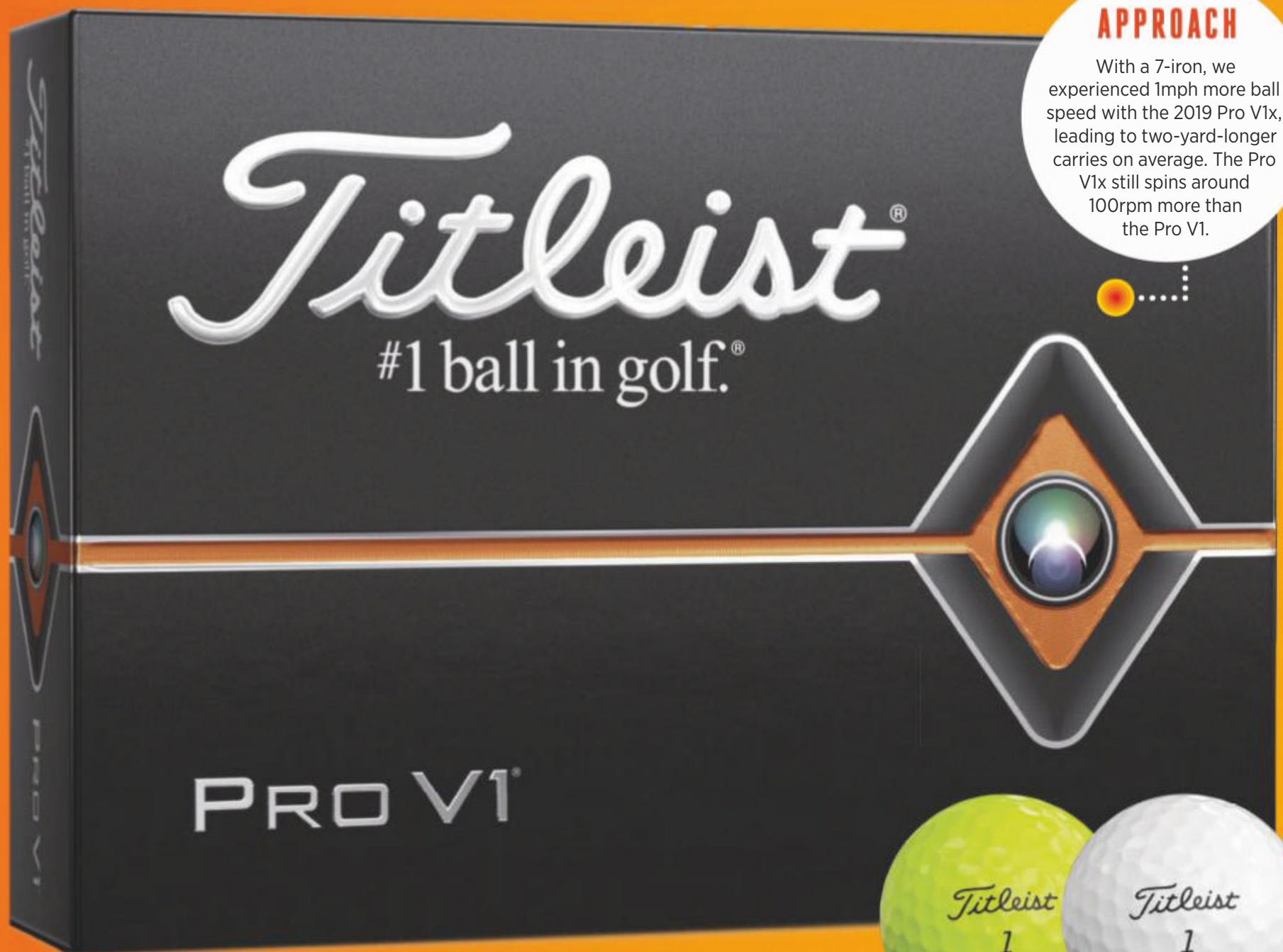


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Reviews



2019 TITLEIST PRO V1 BALLS

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This ball is aimed at anyone looking for best-in-class tee-to-green performance and consistency.

Key technology

The casing layer underneath the cast urethane elastomer cover has been made 14 per cent thicker on Pro V1 and 11 per cent thicker on Pro V1x. Along with a thinner cover, this delivers more

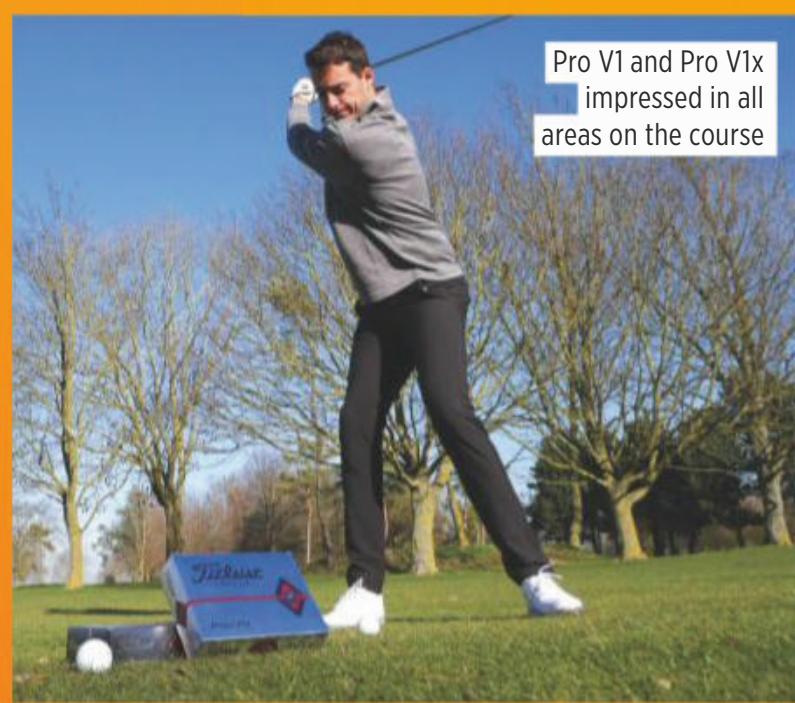
speed and distance while maintaining greenside control and soft feel. New 2.0 ZG Process Cores have been reformulated, with soft centres and progressively stiffer outer portions, creating faster ball speed and lower long-game spin.

How we tested

We tested the new Pro V1 and Pro V1x against the old versions on the GCQuad and on the course.

APPROACH

With a 7-iron, we experienced 1mph more ball speed with the 2019 Pro V1x, leading to two-yard-longer carries on average. The Pro V1x still spins around 100rpm more than the Pro V1.



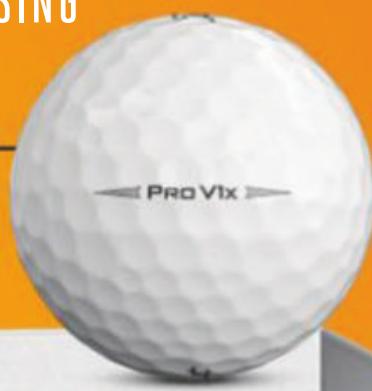
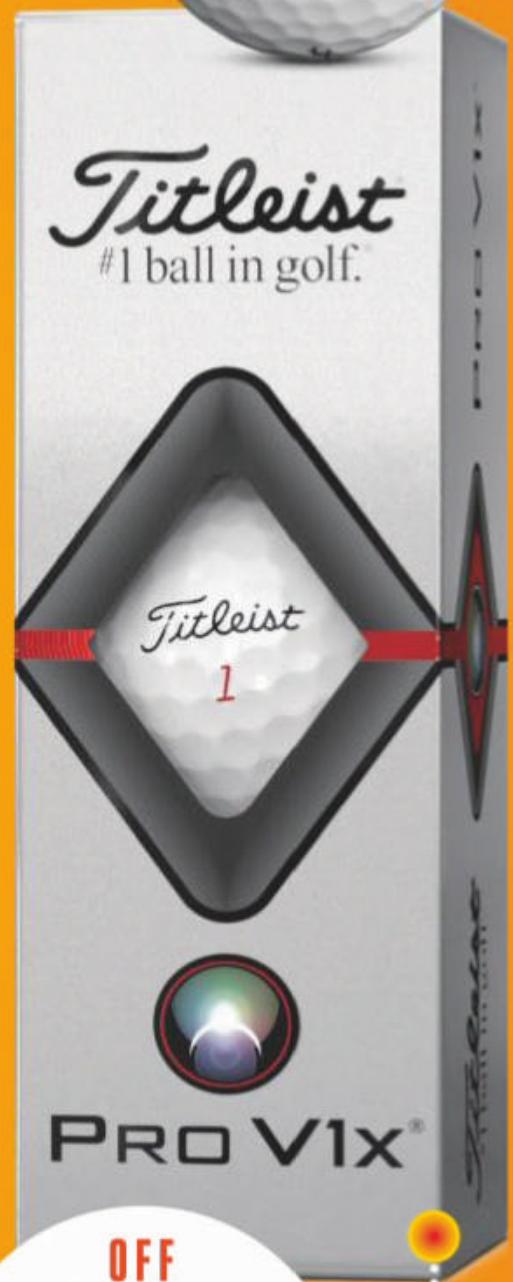
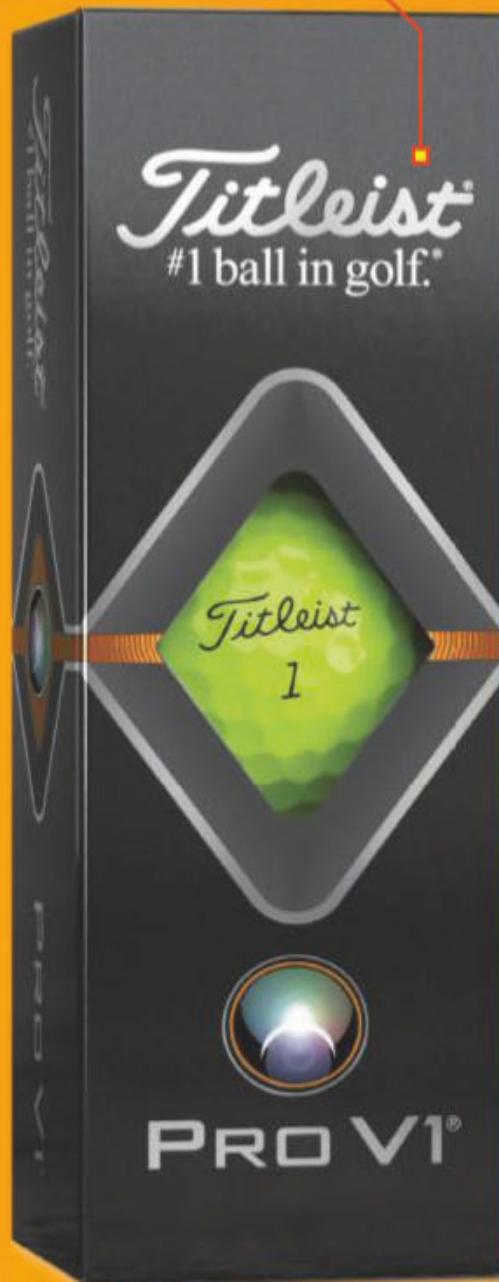
Pro V1 and Pro V1x impressed in all areas on the course



"I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE SUCH A BIG JUMP IN DISTANCE FROM THE NEW BALL WITHOUT LOSING SHORT-GAME CONTROL"

Joel Tadman, GM technical editor

For the first time, 2019 Pro V1 and Pro V1x are also available in High Optic yellow



OFF THE TEE

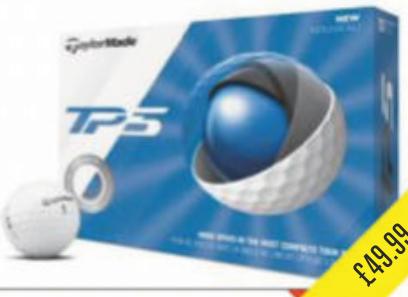
With driver, the Pro V1x added 1mph more ball speed compared with the 2017 version. It also launched lower with 100rpm less spin, resulting in four-yard-longer carries.



SHORT GAME

On a 50-yard pitch, we didn't notice any big differences between the old and new versions, or between Pro V1 and Pro V1x. The latter feels firmer, though.

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SRIXON Z-STAR

The Slide-Ring macromolecule material in the cover aids performance as well as durability.

VERDICT

Pro V1 and Pro V1x continue to set the bar incredibly high when it comes to all-around performance. Even with the thinner cover we can't say we experienced a noticeable drop in short-game control or durability, and the yellow option performed just as impressively as the white while being easier to track in dimmer, overcast conditions. AVX still offers an even lower-spinning and flying alternative, and while they all come with a premium price tag, the trust you can place in the consistency and performance of Pro V1 and Pro V1x is worth the investment.

WANT TO SEE MORE?



To watch our Pro V1 balls review, visit golf-monthly.co.uk/reviews

CALLAWAY EPIC FLASH DRIVER

£499

PERFORMANCE

Ball speeds did increase with Epic Flash compared with Rogue by just over 1mph. Data suggested the clubhead is more efficient at converting club speed into ball speed, leading to longer carries.



This driver is aimed at golfers seeking maximum distance as well as the ability to fine-tune their shot shape.

Key technology

A new Flash Face designed by a super computer consists of dozens of subtle ripples flowing from heel to toe that work together cohesively to elevate distance. Jailbreak bars return to aid in generating faster ball speeds while a new triaxial carbon fabric called T2C saves weight to create a higher MOI. A 16g sliding weight adjusts draw or fade bias.

How we tested

We tested it on the Foresight Sports GCQuad and on the range at West Hill GC in the Project X Hzrdus Smoke 6.5 shaft.

LOOKS

The green and yellow colours certainly catch your eye. At address, the standard model is longer from front to back than the Sub Zero. The curved grey line on the crown is an unnecessary distraction.

VERDICT

The Callaway Epic Flash driver certainly has the potential to provide you with extra distance off the tee, but only if you go through a proper fitting process. Only by optimising the loft, lie angle, shaft and position of the sliding weight will you experience gains.

The Epic Flash is likely to outperform the GBB Epic, especially when it comes to forgiveness and distance consistency, although the battle with Rogue will be much closer. Epic Flash also has a louder, higher-pitched sound than Rogue, which takes some getting used to – move into the Sub Zero model and this becomes

even more exaggerated – but it still feels incredibly hot when a ball is struck from the sweet spot.

The Epic Flash launches the ball higher with more spin, which is ideal for slower swingers seeking extra control. Faster swingers will get more out of the Sub Zero model, thanks to the lower spin and more penetrating ball flight.



It's about obsessing over the little things, the details no one else sees. It's never tolerating anything less than the best. Perfection is a mindset. And that's worth being proud of.



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PING G410 IRON

This iron is designed for golfers who want both distance and forgiveness.

Key technology

The G410 is smaller and yet more forgiving than G400 thanks to a reallocation of weight, including the removal of the Custom Tuning Port in the cavity and tungsten weights being added in the hosel and toe. A top-rail undercut combines with a cascading sole and updated Cor-Eye technology to create a more flexible, free-moving face for increased launch and ball speed. An aluminium and santoprene cavity badge dampens vibration for improved sound and feel.



G410 is smaller but still easy to hit

How we tested

We tested the G410 iron on the Foresight Sports GCQuad launch monitor before hitting it outdoors to assess the sound, feel and ball flight.

VERDICT

It appears Ping's main focus with the G410 was to make it visually more appealing for the mid-handicapper by reducing its size, while still packing in the forgiveness golfers expect from a G-series iron. With a 7-iron loft of 30°, the G410 will still be one of Ping's longest irons in 2019, behind the G700. It slots in neatly between the i500 and i210,

offering golfers of varying abilities a little bit of everything – most notably speed with forgiveness and spin to help keep the ball in the air and stop it on the green.

The rounded sole aids turf interaction, and the feel is solid and explosive without being firm or

sounding overly loud or clicky. There are some minor cosmetic details we don't like, but its size will still inspire confidence at address for the game-improver. Further assurance will come from the consistent carry distances and the high, strong and stable ball flight that comes time and time again.

PERFORMANCE

Most will experience more distance with G410 over G400, as well as more consistency, thanks to improved clubhead stability.



The G410 iron also comes in a stronger-lofted Power Spec for even more distance

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This is for golfers seeking a high-performance, non-adjustable fairway wood option.

Key technology

Twist Face offers a corrective loft and face angle on off-centre hits to reduce side spin and deliver straighter shots. A deep face and larger carbon crown provide optimal distance with playability. Improved slot flexibility creates a larger COR area for more distance, especially on low-face strikes, while the new TPU insert is more flush with the surface for improved turf interaction.

How we tested

We put the 15° M6 fairway in play over multiple rounds at Burghley Park Golf Club in Stamford.

VERDICT

The M6 fairway has a hot, driver-like feel off the face and offers a great deal of forgiveness to rescue a poor strike. We like the lighter feel and larger footprint compared with the M5; it seemed to make it easier to swing and get the ball airborne without climbing too high into the wind.

It's also one of the best-looking fairway woods around and the sole glides effortlessly along the top of the turf, encouraging you to go for par 5s in two when previously you might have played it safe. It isn't adjustable, but it comes in a variety of lofts as well as a D-Type version with extra draw bias. It's no wonder some of the world's best are using it as we think it's one of 2019's top performers. At £269 it offers exceptional value.

PERFORMANCE

M6 launches and flights the ball quite high, with mid-to-low spin helping maximise carry distance. It has proven to be equally adept from the tee and fairway thus far.

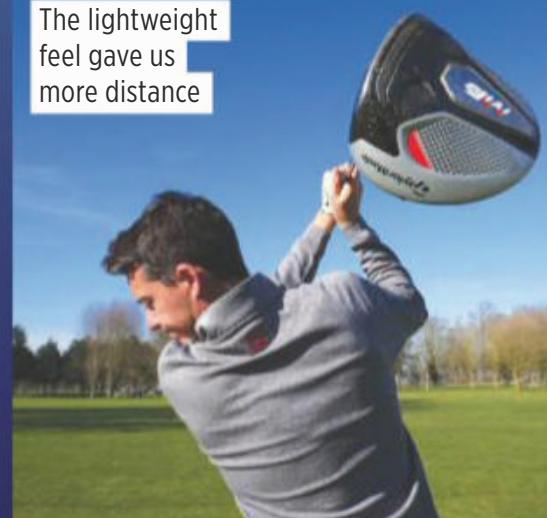


LOOKS

The very low-profile design sits flush to the turf and the silver front section contrasts with the black face and carbon fibre crown, which makes it very easy to align.

The stock Fujikura Atmos Orange 6S shaft is 7g lighter than the stock option on the M5 fairway

The lightweight feel gave us more distance



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" More Ball Speed With Maximum Forgiveness "

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OFFER

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NEW

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C2i GPS
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Price £649.00

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NEW

**Fury
Shoes**



Sizes UK 6 - 12

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3 Colours

" Maximum Comfort With Surround Stability "

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UNDER ARMOUR SPIETH 3 SHOE



This shoe is aimed at golfers seeking high levels of comfort, grip and stability.

Key technology

The Spieth 3 is two ounces lighter than Spieth 2 and features a softer, more flexible RST 2.0 cleat design to improve full-swing grip and stability. The microfibre upper boasts an integrated lacing system, combined with woven jacquard forefoot and heel sections for lightweight support.

VERDICT

Under Armour's golf shoes improve every year and the Spieth 3 is arguably the brand's best ever. It has a lighter, softer feel which enhances walking comfort, helped by the extra

padding around the ankle and a reshaped tongue that provides a snug fit while also sufficiently cushioning the tightened laces on top. With Spieth 3, you have a platform from which to swing without worrying about your foot slipping from under you. The cleats work into the ground more effectively, helping generate force without losing control.

Dirt gathering on the larger woven sections doesn't clean off especially easily and the colour choices are very limited, but that aside, Spieth 3 is certainly one of the most complete performance shoes on the market. Gore-Tex adds even more value.

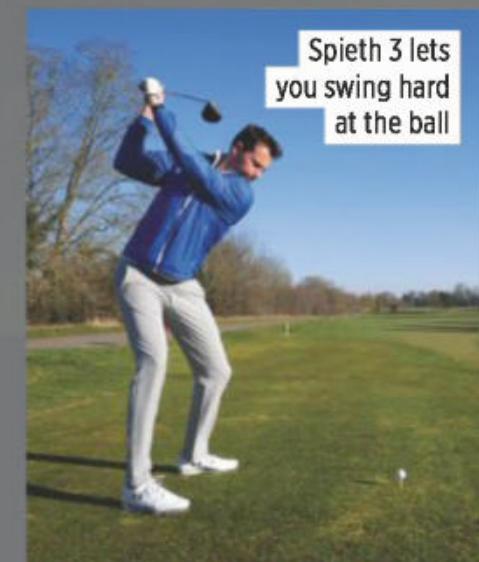
STYLING

More understated than Spieth 2 but still modern and athletic, appealing to those with sporty tastes. The all-white colour is very versatile.

PERFORMANCE

You feel a strong connection with the ground in the swing, the cleats and the rest of the outsole maximising grip without restricting rotation.

The softer RST 2.0 cleats also improve green friendliness





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Joel Tadman



GPS OR LASER RANGEFINDER?

A recent round with a new handheld GPS device has opened my eyes to the limitations of my trusty laser rangefinder. Here, I debate the pros and cons of each...

I'm a laser rangefinder user. Always have been, always will be. Well, that's what I thought until I recently played a round with the new SkyCaddie SX500 handheld GPS. My perception about the vagueness of GPS devices meant I always dismissed them when it came to my weekend rounds, lambasting the generic front, middle and back distances and inwardly cursing the time it takes for the yardages to update.

How wrong I was. Laser rangefinders certainly have their advantages, mostly in getting precise distances to the flag – ideal if you're playing well and know your numbers – but they have their limitations too. Many of the new advances in laser technology are wonderful – they can take into account slope and even temperature and altitude – but they push the price up significantly, which is hard to justify given that you're not permitted to use many of these features in competitive rounds.

I was testing the SX500 against the new Bushnell Pro XE, which, don't get me wrong, is one of the best lasers around (who doesn't want a laser that sticks to your car door?). But a lot of the new features lie dormant in the monthly medal, so it makes me question the value they offer the serious amateur golfer.

By contrast, the level of detail the SX500 provides, along with the clarity and HD detail of the hole maps on the screen, was genuinely mind-blowing. Looking at the hole as the crow flies, I could see, even touch, where I wanted my ball to finish off the tee to avoid the trouble and give myself a preferred distance for my approach shot. It told me distances to reach and carry hazards, while the shape of the green even adjusted on screen based on the direction from which I would be playing.

know the distance to the middle of the green? Many courses have colour-coded pins for front, middle and back and it's ironic to me that a GPS device's basic information may actually help my scores by discouraging me from chasing the tight pins that get me in trouble.

Not everyone will share this outlook and will still prefer to know the exact distance, especially lower handicappers seeking birdies, but there's certainly some merit to aiming at the middle of the green on every approach shot.

“A GPS device’s basic info may well discourage me from chasing tight pins that get me in trouble”

I do think that lasers have their place. Some have GPS functionality and, with practice, they're incredibly quick to use. The SX500 GPS can offer exact distances to the pin too, but realistically that's only if you're in the fortunate position of obtaining a pin sheet, which from my experience is a rarity at most golf clubs besides on Club Championship weekend.

Thinking about it a little deeper, is it really a bad thing if I don't know the exact distance to the flag as long as I

I was one of those golfers but my GPS experience got me reflecting on where I most often drop shots and it is certainly with my irons, although this is partly down to the many technical and mental deficiencies that often keep me awake at night! The fact that lasers rely on line of sight means they're not much use on courses with lots of blind tee shots, and seeing an overview of a hole does provide a clearer image in your mind of what lies ahead, something that's especially useful on unfamiliar tracks.

So, choosing the best type of distance device for you really does depend on the courses you play and whether your rounds are mostly competitive or friendly. It makes sense for a low-handicapper playing mostly competitive rounds at their home club to veer towards a laser, while for golfers who play a lot of new courses, the extra information on a GPS like the SX500 will be invaluable.

As for me, I'm still undecided. Would it be weird to use one of each?

■ Joel Tadman is GM technical editor

WHAT I'VE BEEN TESTING THIS MONTH



POWAKADDY COMPACT C2i GPS ELECTRIC TROLLEY

Easy-to-read distances on a sturdy trolley that folds down in a simple manoeuvre.



G/FORE SADDLE GALLIVANTER SHOES

Perfect for the purist, these leather shoes are surprisingly soft. The sole does clog with dirt a little too easily though.



TAYLORMADE FLEXTECH STAND BAG

Doesn't keep heavy rain completely at bay but is light and has lots of pockets that provide ample storage.

PUTTERS



Spring has sprung and it's time to start holing more putts. Changing equipment is not always the answer, but when a new 'family' of putters arrives, it's hard to resist a nose.

Out on tour, we're seeing more variety than ever before, with trends sweeping in and out of fashion. The arm-lock method is becoming increasingly popular among the world's top players,

while others, like Tiger Woods, are reverting to old faithfus.

Scotty Cameron is keeping us waiting a little longer for its striking Phantom X mallet range, while Ping's Sigma 2 line allows golfers to fine-tune the length to suit their natural posture over the ball. Elsewhere, Odyssey's unique Stroke Lab shaft system is said to produce a more consistent stroke. Now is the best time to experiment with your flat-stick...

"IT DOESN'T HURT TO TRY SOMETHING NEW, BUT IT'S RISKY TO MOVE AWAY FROM A STYLE OF PUTTER THAT HAS BROUGHT YOU SUCCESS IN THE PAST"

Joel Tadman, GM technical editor



The Ping Sigma 2 Anser provides a soft, responsive feel

TaylorMade's Spider X comes in copper and this striking midnight blue

PING

SIGMA 2

This Odyssey Stroke Lab Tuttle has three sightlines to assist with alignment

TOP BUYING TIPS

1

A fitting is well worth it. The putter's length will dictate your posture and eye position at address. Getting it right will help you monitor face alignment.

2

Looks, while important, are just one factor. Where do you need the most help – long-range stability or extra feel from closer in? Some might not offer that.

3

Various grip options add another line of personalisation. A thicker grip can reduce unwanted wrist action. Try before you buy from short, mid and long range.

BEST FOR ALIGNMENT

£399

SCOTTY CAMERON PHANTOM X

Available from June, the nine forgiving mallets come in different shaft bend and alignment options with the striking neon yellow details.

BEST FOR FORGIVENESS

£359.99

ODYSSEY EXO STROKE LAB

A new range of mallets that feature multi-material heads for forgiveness, roll-enhancing Microhinge inserts and Stroke Lab weighting to improve your consistency.

BEST FOR FEEL

£369

BETTINARDI STUDIO STOCK

The mercury grey finish improves the look. Removing material from the face has softened the feel. Models include arm-lock and centre-shafted options.

BEST FROM 2018

£95

WILSON STAFF INFINITE

Each model is counter-balanced at the top and bottom to enhance control, with double-milled faces providing a softer feel. Six head shapes are available.



£299

TAYLORMADE SPIDER X

New True Path Alignment helps magnify where the putter is aiming. It comes in two hosel and sightline choices and two finishes – copper or midnight blue.



£199

PING SIGMA 2

This line should appeal to those who prefer a softer feel. Each model's length can be incrementally adjusted, while the Fetch putter can retrieve the ball from the hole.



£365

SCOTTY CAMERON SELECT

The four-way balanced sole design aids alignment, as do the refined contours and sight cues. The Fastback 2 and Select Squareback 1.5 mid-mallets are new to the range.



£275

PING VAULT 2.0

This milled collection features a True Roll face pattern that speeds up off-centre hits for improved distance control. Available in three finishes and many different head shapes.



FROM £179

ODYSSEY O-WORKS

A wide variety of shapes impart more topspin for a truer roll. The Red and Black ranges feature new 'toe-down' mallets designed to naturally rotate like a blade.



FROM £309

EVNROLL ER

The unique mill pattern delivers uniform speed and line performance across the hitting area. The black mallet ER5B is one of four striking new models for 2019.



£429

ODYSSEY TOULON DESIGN

Nine models feature a deep diamond mill across the face and cross-hatch grooves to control sound and feel. The Odyssey Stroke Lab shafts aid tempo and consistency.



£219

TAYLORMADE TP BLACK COPPER COLLECTION

Features TaylorMade's PureRoll aluminium insert for a slightly firmer feel and a SuperStroke GT 1.0 grip to enhance clubface control.



TESTED BY YOU

Would two GM readers enjoy similar performance gains with **Titleist TS drivers** as many leading tour pros?

The driver may not be the most-used club in your golf bag, but there's no denying it's the most glamorous and the one that attracts the most chatter in the clubhouse. Every golfer, whether amateur or professional, wants to hit the ball further and outdrive their playing partners.

Earlier this year, Titleist's new TS drivers caused quite a stir when they helped the brand top the Sony Open driver count, with 38 players using the new TS2 or TS3 models. It was the first time Titleist had topped a driver count for 18 years, so naturally it created renewed interest in these two models, which were launched in late 2018.

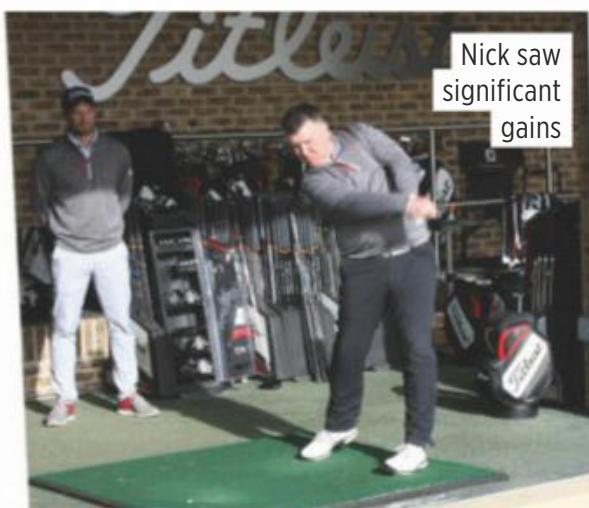
TS is an abbreviation of Titleist Speed, with both models featuring multiple technologies

making up a Speed Chassis, among them a more streamlined shape and profile, the thinnest titanium crown in the industry and a face that's so thin the scorelines you apparently see are merely laser etchings.

The TS2 is engineered to launch a little higher, but the primary goal in both is increased ball speed. Every extra mile per hour potentially equates to extra yards, with tour pro after tour pro citing worthwhile gains. But would two *Golf Monthly* readers enjoy similar benefits?

We took 5-handicapper Nick Palmer and 16-handicapper Andrew Russell along to Titleist's National Fitting Centre in St Ives, Cambridgeshire, where James Robinson, product specialist manager for Titleist, conducted their fittings.

1. NICK PALMER



Nick saw significant gains

Fitter analysis

Nick's current 9.5° 915 D2 was pretty straight with reasonable launch conditions, so we didn't want to change much. We tried both heads and performance was similar, but Nick preferred the TS2's

visuals. Even with the standard shaft, ball speed rose from 142mph to 145mph. The Tensei Blue in stiff worked best, with ball speed up to 147mph.

Nick's feedback

I had been fitted for my previous driver but wasn't quite prepared for just how much technology has moved on. My new TS2 has given me at least ten more yards. The set-up and spec are similar to my old driver, so it's reassuring to see that my game has remained fairly consistent but now with added distance. Given the success I had during the fitting and

out on the course, I've now purchased a TS2 3-wood, which has also resulted in significant distance gains.



Handicap: 16
Club: East Berks GC
Fitted for: Titleist TS3, 9.5°, Project X Hzrdus Smoke 5.5 70g shaft, D3 setting, standard 45.5in



2. ANDREW RUSSELL

Fitter analysis

Andrew had a left-to-right flight and was carrying it around 190 yards, with spin too high at around 3,500rpm. TS3 outperformed TS2 as it spins a little less. A heavier shaft helped too, and we quickly found the right head/shaft combo so spent time fine-tuning the SureFit hosel and rear weight. His best drives were carrying 220 yards, with spin nearer 2,500rpm and ball speed up by two to three miles an hour. There was still a bit of left to right, but he was finding the fairway more often.

Andrew's on-course feedback

My driver was five years old and I was reasonably happy with it. I



Andrew with fitter James

thought performance was more down to the operator than the equipment, but there have been significant advances and I now have a Titleist TS3 that's set up for my game. I've played a couple of rounds the way James has set the weights and clubface, which has

given me more distance and accuracy and reduced my slice. It looks good and feels very stable at impact too.



Handicap: 5
Club: Hartley Wintney GC
Fitted for: Titleist TS2, 9.5°, Mitsubishi Tensei Blue stiff shaft, D4 setting, standard 45.5in



ALSO CONSIDER



£449

ADJUSTABLE

MIZUNO ST190G

An ultra-light crown allows more weight to be relocated, while high levels of adjustability let you fine-tune ball flight.



£450

CUSTOMISABLE

PING G410 PLUS

Ping's first movable-weight driver can promote draws or fades. More pronounced Turbulators reduce drag.



£499

SUPER-FAST

TAYLORMADE M5

Speed Injected Twist Face promotes faster ball speeds without compromising forgiveness.



£499

HIGHLY FORGIVING

CALLAWAY EPIC FLASH

New Flash Face and stabilising Jailbreak technology promote faster speeds across the face.

HEAD TO HEAD

They're packed full of technology, but which of these fairway woods impressed us most?



£269

CALLAWAY EPIC FLASH

Shaft: Project X Hzrdus Smoke Black 70 stiff
Loft: 15°

LOOKS

Similar in size and shape to the ST190, it looks inviting to hit but there are a lot of distracting graphics on the face. It would also arguably look better if the curved grey line on the crown wasn't there.

PERFORMANCE

Very hot, almost driver-like from the sweetspot. It produced some of the longest carries of any fairway wood. It had a tendency to miss left off the tee, but the flight was high with a decent run on landing.

VERSATILITY

The slightly higher spin and flight provides some extra stopping power into par 5s without punishing well-struck tee shots significantly. The smoother sole felt like it was a little quicker through the turf, too.

FORGIVENESS

I actually achieved my fastest ball speeds with the Epic Flash but some shots also dropped off more than the Mizuno, which could be down to the strikes or perhaps a slight lack of off-centre forgiveness.

OVERALL APPEAL

One of the fastest-feeling fairways on the market impressed from both the tee and the fairway. There's a wide shaft matrix available to fine-tune flight and many will enjoy the stock Golf Pride Align grip.

41



JOEL TADMAN
 Technical Editor
 Handicap 5



£279

MIZUNO ST190

Shaft: Mitsubishi Chemical Tensei CK 70 stiff
Loft: 15°

LOOKS

Very appealing at address with the graphics and carbon fibre details visible on the crown. It has a rounded shape and sits flush to the turf. It perhaps sits a fraction open and isn't the easiest to align.

PERFORMANCE

As well as a slightly higher-pitched sound, the ST190 has an explosive feel and combines high launch with low spin, leading to exceptional average carry and total distances comparable to any other in 2019.

VERSATILITY

The lower launch and spin arguably makes the ST190 a stronger option off the tee, but faster swing speeds should be able to flight shots from good lies in the fairway, assisted by the impressive forgiveness.

FORGIVENESS

Ball speeds were more consistently high with the ST190, and although the lower spin made it a little more difficult to control direction, off-centre strikes didn't seem to be punished quite as much.

OVERALL APPEAL

It seemed to be easier to hit consistently long shots and control dispersion. Adjustability comes via the pricier TS model, so spec options are limited, but it is a big leap forward from Mizuno and worthy of victory.

42

	Ball speed (mph)	Launch (°)	Spin (rpm)	Peak height (yards)	Carry (yards)
CALLAWAY	150.1	12.7	2,751	32	251
MIZUNO	151.4	12.3	2,700	31	254



Courses

MUST PLAY MURCAR LINKS

Many stretches of the UK coast are blessed with more than their fair share of first-rate links, with Aberdeenshire one such stretch even before Trump's fanfare arrival. Cruden Bay, Royal Aberdeen and Murcar already made up a very strong cast, with the final two backing on to each other over some very fine linksland indeed just ten minutes from Aberdeen city centre.

You play down towards Royal Aberdeen on the 1st at Murcar, then head back and forth for a couple of holes before striding purposefully north along the coast for a stretch of particularly fine holes, turning back once on the fiendishly tricky par-3 5th. Murcar combines expansive views out to sea with, at times, more secluded-feeling holes along the dune valleys. A number of elevated tees add to the visual appeal.

HISTORY

Murcar Links entered *Golf Monthly*'s Top 100 two lists ago and is celebrating its 110th birthday this year. It was laid out in 1909 by Archie Simpson while he



was serving as greenkeeper and professional at Royal Aberdeen next door.

James Braid tweaked things in the 1930s, and more recently there have been further refinements from local company Team Niblick Ltd, including a comprehensive bunker renovation. Murcar has hosted several important events, among them qualifying for the

Don't stray left on the par-4 7th

Senior Open Championship in 2005 when it was staged at Royal Aberdeen and, most notably, the European Tour's Paul Lawrie Match Play in 2015.

SIGNATURE HOLES

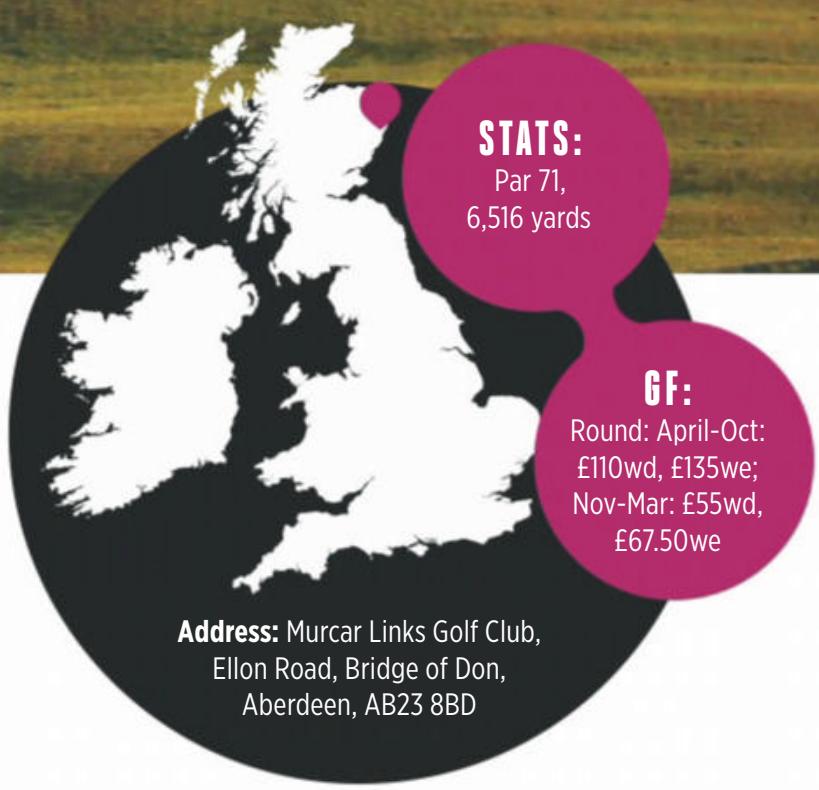
The 6th and 7th form a memorable back-to-back par-4 duo. The former is a long hole from an elevated tee that doglegs round to



the left, with the apex protected by a solitary revetted bunker; the latter is a straighter hole flanked by a vast gorse bank on the left that narrows the fairway significantly on the approach. Anything left is a goner, while the wetland area along the right is not recommended either.

Perhaps the hole you will remember most, though, is the

mid-length par-3 5th, Plateau. It plays across gorse and rough to a green protected by a steep bank on the left, run-offs to the rear and two pot bunkers on the right if you play overly safe up that side. The members, apparently, see it as a longer version of Troon's Postage Stamp, though it also has shades of the 4th at Worplesdon in Surrey some 560 miles to the south.

**STATS:**

Par 71,
6,516 yards

GF:

Round: April-Oct:
£110wd, £135we;
Nov-Mar: £55wd,
£67.50we

Address: Murcar Links Golf Club,
Ellon Road, Bridge of Don,
Aberdeen, AB23 8BD

**BEACONSFIELD**

Buckinghamshire

Peacefully located just minutes from the M40, Beaconsfield dates back to 1902 and is a very popular members' club blessed with a particularly characterful clubhouse. Harry Colt was engaged to design its lovely parkland course in 1913 and his legacy has lasted extremely well. With a par of 72, the course is home to the Luke Donald Salver, which is played annually in honour of the former World No.1 who learned his game here. Holes 6 to 13 run to the north of the railway cutting and feature two very fine par 3s.

W: beaconsfieldgolfclub.co.uk**GF:** Round: £70; Day: £95**KILLEEN CASTLE**

County Meath

An hour from the centre of Dublin, the beautiful course at Killeen Castle was designed by Jack Nicklaus and features his flamboyant styling with water hazards and distinctive bunkering. Having said that, there is also a real subtlety here, with ancient trees framing many of the holes and a genuine feeling of peace and space. The course staged a very successful Solheim Cup in 2011, and there is something new to think about or look at on every hole. For a Next 100 course of this quality, the green fee offers very good value.

W: killeencastle.com**GF:** Round: €55-€80

BEST OF UK & IRELAND

This month's whistle-stop tour visits four delightfully different courses

**ELIE**

Fife

The county of Fife is Scotland's equivalent of Surrey, packed with wonderful courses to the extent that some are occasionally overlooked. Elie is one such course, a superb and traditional links which dates back to Old Tom Morris, with subsequent revisions from James Braid. Very unusually, perhaps uniquely, there are 16 par 4s. These range in length from 252 to 466 yards, and the lonely but very memorable pair of par 3s are also extreme; one long, one short. Look out for the periscope in the starter's hut!

W: golfhouseclub.co.uk**GF:** Round: £85wd, £105we; Day: £105wd, £128we**CLYNE**

Swansea

With Pennard just along the coast, comparisons are inevitable as Clyne enjoys a similar terrain along with magnificent elevated views. As at Beaconsfield, this is a Colt design, but the two could hardly be more different, with this rugged, undulating, moorland course running over common, grazing land. There are many natural hazards as well as hidden pot bunkers, and there is something new at every turn. Gorse and bracken abound, and even when the wind is blowing or your game is not at its best, the views more than compensate.

W: clynegolfclub.com**GF:** Round: £40wd, £50we; Day: £60wd, £75we

FOCUS ON... SOUTH WALES



FROM
£25

Jeremy Ellwood discovers some golfing treasures in and around the glorious Brecon Beacons National Park

1 NEWPORT

Newport may now be forever part of Ryder Cup folklore, but the town's original golf club has been around a lot longer than Celtic Manor. The club was founded on a nine-hole course in 1903 before moving to its current home at Rogerstone nine years later, where the parkland course plays around and through Llwyni Wood in two main sections.

The opening duo takes you across to the far section via an

interesting down-and-up par 4 that doglegs to the right, and a lovely self-contained par 3 ably defended at the front by six bunkers. You may need to make your score in the stretch from the 4th to the 7th, where you'll face three par 5s in four holes, for the 8th is a fearsomely long par 3 that beckons bogey.



The daunting par-3 8th

The club moved to its current location in 1912

You cross back to the clubhouse side via the tricky 11th, a modest par 4 that punches well above its length as it pinches in alarmingly in the driving zone.

The 14th hole is another cracking par 3 where the bunker count rises to seven, and the 17th is then one of the very best holes for views, with a glorious backdrop

opening up as you play down to the green from the crest.

Stats: Par 72, 6,500 yards
W: newportgolfclub.org.uk
GF: Round: £25-£50
 Mon-Fri. Prices vary seasonally



2

NEATH

Some of the hilltop courses in the valleys are among my favourite places to play when you just want to experience that away-from-it-all feeling that hilltop golf delivers.

James Braid's 1934 heathland creation at Neath is a prime example, boasting excellent far-reaching views from a layout that climbs early on to reveal a golfing world of trees, heather, gorse, drystone walls and undulating greens.



Plenty of ups and downs at Neath

Once you're up high above the valley floors the panorama is simply magnificent, especially from the 10th and 11th holes as you gaze down on the hustle and bustle. What goes up must come down, and at Neath it all happens via the mid-length par-4 15th – The Pulpit – which plunges dramatically in one fell swoop. Savour the hang time you'll get to experience off this tee.

Stats: Par 72, 6,490 yards
W: neathgolfclub.co.uk
GF: Round: £28-£39wd (£17-£23 on Mon), £33-£44we

3

MOUNTAIN ASH

Mountain Ash is a short but very pretty course perched atop Cefnpennar mountain not far from Aberdare. It starts with a surprisingly long and difficult par 4, then a number of chances to score before you start your ascent on the 5th.

Once you get to the very top, you'll enjoy a series of hugely enjoyable holes, some framed by heather, with the 459-yard 8th one of the sternest tests of all on account of both length and width. You'll also get to savour some tremendous views up the Aberdare Valley and even across to the Brecon Beacons.

The descent comes pretty much all in one go from the launchpad tee of a closing par 5, where the state of your card to this point may well determine the extent to which you're prepared to really open your shoulders.

Stats: Par 69, 5,553 yards
W: mountainashgc.co.uk
GF: Round: £10-15wd, £15-£20we.
 Prices vary seasonally

FROM
£10



Heather is one of the hazards at Mountain Ash

4

MAESTEG

This lovely James Braid course in the Llynfi Valley a few miles north of Bridgend plays over that springy moorland turf that many golfers find so accommodating. Despite not quite making it to 6,000 yards it has a number of surprisingly testing challenges in store, among them

the elusive shelf green on the 450-yard 5th and the 459-yard 8th that plays gently round to the left and down to the green.

Coming home you'll remember the drive between the pines on the 11th and the excellent dogleg 15th.

Stats: Par 70, 5,889 yards
W: maesteg-golf.co.uk
GF: Round: £16-20wd, £18-£25we.
 Prices vary seasonally



The 16th at Maesteg

5

CRADOC

A round at Cradoc is always worth it because the views of the Brecon Beacons can soothe away all but the most serious of golfing ills. The course, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, is a very pleasant parkland layout playing across the slopes, with a little detour up to the higher ground on the 10th and 11th. The former is a short par 4 straight up the hill, while the latter is Cradoc's fiddliest test between a copse on the right and out of bounds on the left. Take it on at your peril.

Stats: Par 71, 6,188 yards
W: cradoc.co.uk
GF: Round: from £15 to £38 any day

FROM
£15



Cradoc's 15th



STAY

Coed-y-Mwstwr Hotel, Cychurch

This elegant Victorian red-brick four-star country house hotel in Cychurch near Bridgend looks out over the Vale of Glamorgan. It is part of a small group of hotels in this area of Wales called the Town and Country Collective. All 35 rooms are en suite and individually decorated in keeping with the building's heritage. This is a dog-friendly hotel with plenty to keep you and any canine chums occupied over its 17 acres of woodland. The hotel also has a tennis court, gym, sauna and steam room.

W: coed-y-mwstwr.com



EAT/DRINK

Nant Ddu Lodge, Cwm Taf

The Bar & Bistro at this 33-bedroom hotel on the A470 Merthyr to Brecon road, close to Cantref Reservoir, specialises in locally sourced Welsh cuisine. You can eat outside on the terrace in the summer lapping up the views.

W: nant-ddu-lodge.co.uk

VISIT

Brecon Beacons National Park

Whether you want to cycle, walk or simply drive, the Brecon Beacons serve up some of South Wales' finest scenery. Pen-y-Fan is the highest peak in southern Britain at just under 3,000ft.

W: breconbeacons.org

6

MORLAIS CASTLE

This enjoyable course just north of Merthyr Tydfil opens with a generous downhill par 5 towards the Brecon Beacons, before turning left for a tempting short par 4 towards some rocky outcrops just beyond the green where the never-quite-finished Morlais Castle once stood.

The 3rd is then a fearsome long par 4 flanking the castle remains, which narrows in alarmingly as it descends to the green. The course was extended to 18 holes 30 years ago and the pick of the newer holes includes the dramatic par-5 16th that hugs a quarry down the left.

Stats: Par 71, 6,323 yards

W: morlaisgolf.com

GF: Round: £20wd, £25we

The 2nd plays towards the castle remains



STAY & PLAY ADARE MANOR

Mike Harris visits Limerick to see the results of a stunning upgrade



THE GOLF

Par 72, 7,509 yards

When GM's new Top 100 rankings for the UK&I were announced, the star of the show was Adare Manor, which re-entered at 25.

The original layout, designed by Robert Trent Jones, was already well regarded, but the transformation undertaken since Irish businessman JP McManus bought the property in 2015 is nothing short of incredible. The course was closed for two years in order for Tom Fazio to oversee the redesign and no expense was spared. State-of-the-art drainage was installed, including a sub-air system under the greens; new bunkering and completely new playing surfaces were laid throughout; and a 50-strong greenkeeping team ensures the conditioning remains perfect.

The result is the most Augusta-like experience that can be found anywhere in Europe, and it's no secret the venue has ambitions to host some big tournaments, including the Ryder Cup.

Also play... Ballybunion

(ballybuniongolfclub.com) – 36 holes of windswept majestic links.

THE HOTEL

As with the golf course, the hotel also received a full renovation, restoring it to its former 19th-



STATS:

Par 72,
7,509 yards

GF:
€270-€375
per round

The incredible
transformation took
two years to complete



Adare Manor, Co. Limerick,
V94 W8WR, Ireland
T: +353 61 605 200
W: www.adaremanor.com

century Tudor-revival glory. As you step into the Great Hall reception, the feeling of opulence surrounds you.

Bedrooms offer a combination of classic style and modern luxury and those with views of the golf course and gardens offer an added visual delight. Foodies can indulge their passion with fine dining in the Manor House, while the Carriage House, which also acts as the clubhouse, offers informal but equally delicious options. The service is first class, blending warm Irish hospitality with a polished five-star experience.

As you'd expect there is a world-class spa, as well as swimming, a gym, fishing, archery, horse riding, falconry, clay pigeon shooting and cycling.

Where else... The village of Adare, just a short stroll beyond the gates of the Manor, is regarded as one of Ireland's prettiest.

BEST DEAL

Two nights' accommodation for two people in the Manor House, breakfast each morning in The Gallery and one round of golf per person. Prices from €640.

WHERE

Shannon International airport is a 30-minute drive, Cork airport is a 90-minute drive and Dublin airport is two-and-a-half hours away.

CHECKLIST

Caddie: €75

Buggy hire: €60

Trolley hire: €10

Club hire: €70

Driving range: Yes

Putting green: Yes

Short-game area: Yes

Pro shop: Yes

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Sky TV: Yes

Wi-Fi: Yes

Price of a pint: €5.40 for Guinness and €6.00 for lager





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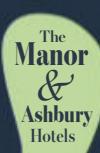
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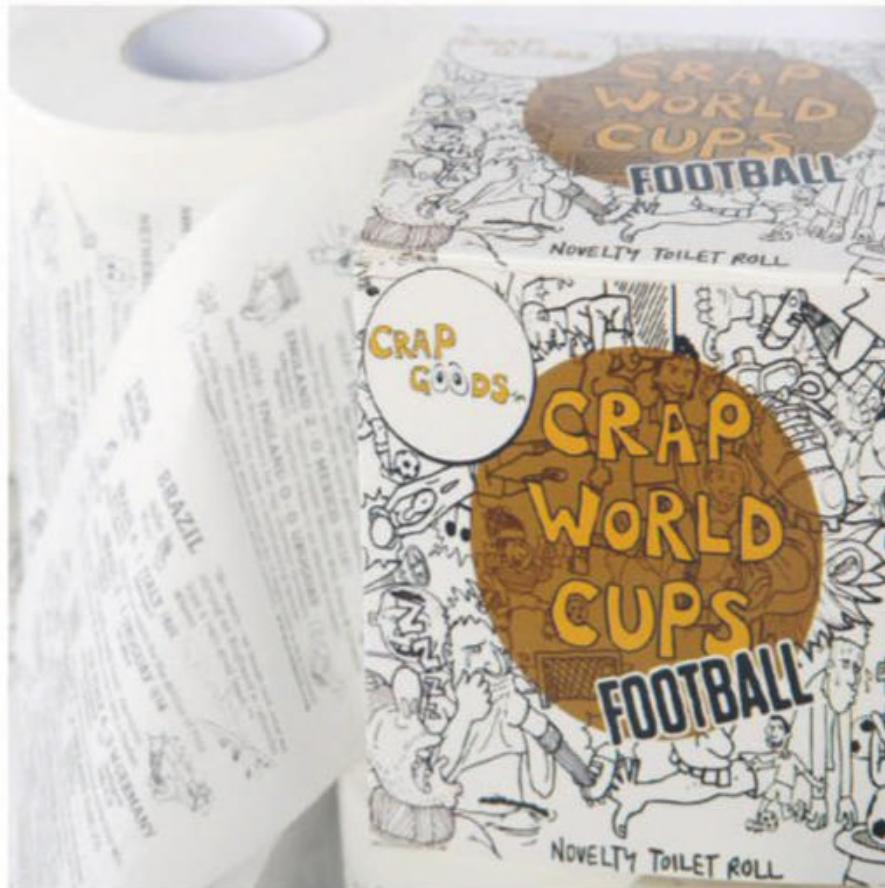


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AS RELEVANT AS EVER

In this era of instant access to information and platforms like Twitter connecting players with fans, has the importance of journalists diminished? Not at all, according to our editor-at-large

To London twice in a few days. Once to a glitzy awards dinner at which a talented platoon of the country's outstanding sportswriters and photographers were suitably rewarded for their efforts over the past year, and then 72 hours later to St Bride's Church, which is tucked away a few yards off Fleet Street and which has been the spiritual home of the media for many years.

Fleet Street, of course, is no longer headquarters for the nation's great newspapers. These days the one-time home of the old trade is a more mundane area, the former newspaper offices now filled with people who know about insurance and finance and other apparently important stuff.

This means the pubs are quieter, the lunchtimes shorter and the fun much harder to find. Those of us who spent important bits of our careers there still feel a thrill just walking down towards St Paul's from the law courts, but it is the thrill of remembering what was, not what is. Anyway, I was there to join many others in celebrating the life of James Lawton, who I first met when we were both on the sports desk of the *Daily Express* in Manchester a couple of years before The Beatles split up.

Jim matured into a brilliant observer of the sports scene, his enthusiasm for the daft games we play and his effortless eloquence in describing the participants and the surroundings lifting him into the elite of our own game. I'll be back at St Bride's sooner than desired to celebrate another wonderful sportswriter, Hugh

McIlvanney, who died earlier this year and who leaves behind a legacy of what some of us consider genius.

What has this to do with golf? Well, as I wandered away from the church – yes, to a pub – I reflected on why sportswriters have any relevance in this age of instant news, scores, sackings or updates on what's happening at The Masters. We may all see this stuff as we walk down any street, even watching the television pictures on our phones.

Yet while these scores and pictures tell us much, they never tell the whole story. It's always been important to have a journalist who tells you what you either can't or don't see and even more important for him or her to tell you what this or that sports star is really like. These days, however, when players have their own Twitter accounts and the rest of the web paraphernalia, they do not need a sportswriter to get their opinions across. The big difference is the journalist is apt to ask a question they don't expect and to elicit a reply that is not flavoured with the need to please a sponsor or dulled by the anodyne hand of a PR assistant.

While TV has immeasurably enhanced our general enjoyment of sport and especially golf, your better idea of what a supposed hero is really like will almost certainly have been offered to you by a journalist. It's harder than ever for the sportswriter to do this today, because so many stars are barricaded by a team of helpers and press conferences are organised in such a way that any sort of close contact is frowned upon if not physically impossible. But we try.

Before so much money poured into so many games, the players and journalists would mingle socially, get to know each other and occasionally form real friendships. Although there would be occasions when one would think the other had misquoted them or made some other error, usually we got over such rifts swiftly enough.

The fact is that while television can make a golfer a bigger star, the real history of the game is still being written by a journalist who has a way with words and a keenly observant eye. The television pictures enhance this but they do not yet replace it. This is what the team here on *Golf Monthly* try to do and sometimes I believe we succeed, whether it is via an in-depth interview or a personal opinion. We are all aware of the need for accuracy as well as the desire to make it entertaining and interesting. Above all we try to tell you something you would not otherwise know.

This is what Lawton and McIlvanney and the rest of us reach for every time we rattle out a feature or offer an opinion. It is not as easy to do as some think, but then again it is not as hard as grafting away in a monotonous job that you hate. So I'm glad to say that after a couple of fortifying pints following Jim's memorial service, I concluded that sportswriters are as relevant today as ever we were. Thanks for reading. That, really, is the whole, reassuring point.

■ Bill Elliott is *Golf Monthly*'s editor-at-large and Golf Ambassador for Prostate Cancer UK

“The journalist is apt to elicit a reply that is not flavoured with the need to please a sponsor or dulled by the anodyne hand of a PR assistant”



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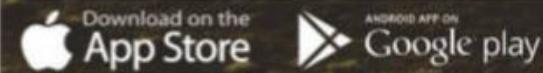
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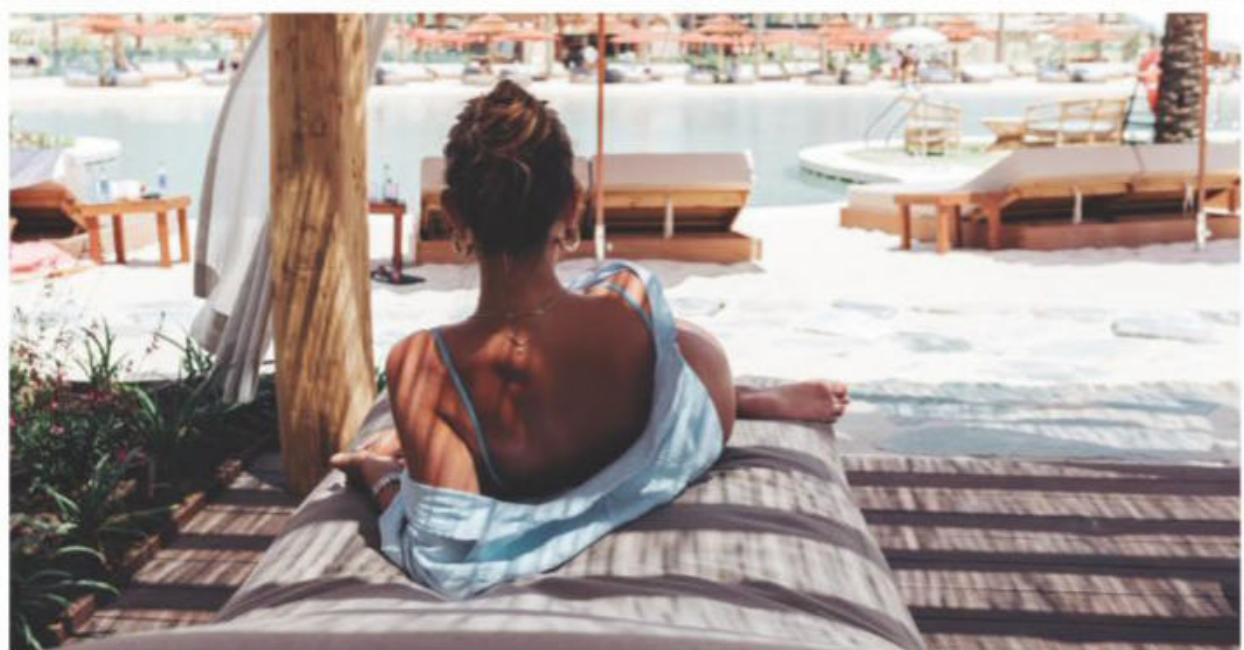
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THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER

Mercifully, we've reached the point of the year where two coats aren't required and there's still light as we make our way home from work. For all but the hardiest of winter golfers, this means it's time to get the clubs out again and start planning for the year ahead. It's always nice to tick off new courses in the UK, but why not go one step further and plan a trip abroad? We're confident you'll be doing exactly that after reading our annual *Must Play* travel supplement.

As always, our team of intrepid golf travel writers have been far and wide to find the next up-and-coming golf-break destination or review established classics. In this special supplement, you'll find a mixture of short- and long-haul destinations that will no doubt set you on a path to that trip you've been thinking about all winter.

On page six, pilot Alex Frolish recounts some of the best courses he's played in our 'Have Plane, Will Travel' feature, including layouts in Brazil, Malaysia and Egypt. Some of our other

writers have also travelled to similarly exotic locations, with James Mason reporting from St Kitts, Jeremy Ellwood embarking on a tour of Dubai and Abu Dhabi and Rob Smith taking on one of the world's top 100 courses in the Dominican Republic. As you'll see, it's not a bad place for a game of golf!

Closer to home, Jezz Ellwood explains why Sotogrande in southern Spain is going from strength to strength and Nick Bonfield takes a trip to Carrossa on Mallorca to explore the island's newest five-star hotel – conveniently located within easy reach of no fewer than five golf courses. Elsewhere, we visit Italy, Portugal, the United States and Greece.

Putting *Must Play* together has only served to reinforce the fact we're extremely lucky to enjoy a hobby with such incredible variation and global strength in depth. If you're yet to experience this for yourself, surely it's about time?

Nick Bonfield and David Taylor
Editors, *Must Play 2019*

Design: Dean Chillmaid **Contributors and Writers:** Nick Bonfield, David Taylor, Jeremy Ellwood, Fergus Bisset, Rob Smith, Michael Weston, James Mason, Roderick Easdale, Alex Frolish, Sam Tremlett **Advertising:** Chris O'Hagan **Advertising Tel:** 01252 555 366 **Cover Image:** Four Seasons Nevis, St Kitts and Nevis **Photography:** Getty Images, Kevin Murray

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Golf all year

A former host to the Madeira Islands Open, the Severiano Ballesteros-designed Porto Santo Golfe, is one of three stunning courses in the Madeira archipelago, and spans an area from sand dunes to basalt cliffs. With two distinct nines, the US-style southern route is dotted with lakes, requiring a long, precise game; while the northern route is atop fantastic cliffs, near a stunning beach.



Plane
~~HAVE CLUBS,~~
WILL TRAVEL

**Alex Frolish's day job means he's able to play on some
of the most beautiful golf courses around the world**

People always assume that being a commercial pilot is my dream job, but before ever considering flying, I dreamed of being a professional golfer, or at the least a caddie. I loved the game from the moment I picked up a club.

Shortly after my third birthday, Dad handed me a cut-down 3-wood which he had made for me, with black duct tape simulating a grip. I swung that club incessantly, morning, noon and night. My passion for the game was ignited and lessons on Saturdays soon followed.

Those range sessions carved out a rich love affair with golf that has never faltered. My starting handicap of 24

quickly descended to 17 and then 10, and by the age of 15 I was playing off 4. This culminated in me gaining my city colours and attending county coaching, but I had reached my talent threshold.

After serving over a decade in the military and now flying commercially, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to combine my two great passions.

Now 34 years old and playing less frequently – off a handicap of 5 – my passion for the game is still strong.

Playing beautiful courses around the world is now my driving force, and to be able to pursue that goal while travelling with work is a privilege, as is the ability to share those experiences with you. ▶



Alex in the cockpit en route to another course



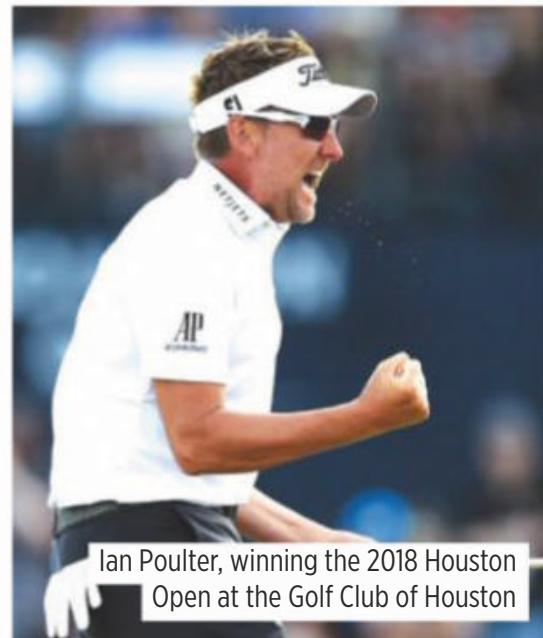


TEMPLER PARK GOLF CLUB, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Playing in Malaysia is always a wonderful assault on the senses, although often it's a very humid affair. Carving its way through the jungle and craggy limestone outcrops, Templer Park Golf Club north of Kuala Lumpur is a pleasure to play. The first thing you'll notice is the impressive Bukit Takun limestone hill that looms over the course.

Colourfully vibrant and visually captivating, the natural sights and diverse sounds of the wildlife are beautiful and inspirational. Watch out for the opportunistic cheeky monkeys primed to steal your lunch, or more worryingly, the tigers that have been seen crossing the fairways on occasion.

Designers Kentaro Sato and Masashi 'Jumbo' Ozaki have used the natural features to their advantage. A mix of water hazards and impenetrable jungle borders containing snakes means that you need to be accurate (and long, if playing off the back tees)! The clubhouse and practice facilities won't



Ian Poulter, winning the 2018 Houston Open at the Golf Club of Houston

Top tip

Make sure you get to the Golf Club of Houston well before your tee time. The practice facilities are fabulous and an hour on the range really adds to the experience.

blow you away, but don't let that take away from the course. Value-wise, it's reasonable compared to some of its more famous neighbours, especially midweek. I guarantee that whatever the golf has been like, you'll be smiling happily as you walk off the 18th.

GOLF CLUB OF HOUSTON TOURNAMENT COURSE, HOUSTON, USA

Like most of Texas, space and real estate isn't a problem here. The tournament course, designed by Rees Jones and David Toms, is a sublime layout crafted through the heart of the bayou. It's a serene and memorable location.

Home to the PGA Tour's Shell Houston Open, this is one of only a handful of public courses that held PGA Tour events in the 2017-18 season. Historically held the week before The Masters, the greens have been used by some pros as a good lead-in to Augusta.

White-sand bunkers are a real feature of the course and contribute to making it so pleasing on the eye. Water is also abundant and is used intelligently in



The 9th hole on Pete Dye's Ocean course at Kiawah Island

proximity to greens to add to the intimidation factor. If that combination isn't enough, swampland penalty areas line many of the fairways, sometimes on both sides. If you can keep the same ball in play for 18 holes, you know you have played very well.

THE OCEAN COURSE, KIAWAH ISLAND GOLF RESORT, SOUTH CAROLINA, USA

When I visited South Carolina, I knew I had to play here. Some of my earliest memories of watching golf as a young boy were the 1991 Ryder Cup. The intensity of the competition was mesmerising, and so was the course. The imagery is some of the most iconic in golfing history and that's in no small part down to the spectacular setting.

This is a hard golf course. It measures 7,873 yards from the back tees and regularly features in lists of the toughest courses in America. Designer Pete Dye created a monster and even though it has been softened since opening in 1991, don't expect to play to your handicap.



Rio's stunning
Olympic Golf Course

One certainty is that you will spend time playing from the sand. Picking lines off the tee can be difficult and the local caddies provide invaluable help. The wind usually blows and large parts of the course were elevated by Dye leaving most areas above the height of the protective dunes. The closing five holes run alongside the ocean and are as breathtaking as they are brutal. This is the best closing stretch I've played anywhere in the world.

THE OLYMPIC GOLF COURSE (CAMPO OLIMPICO DE GOLFE), RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

Playing here was very special, as it's unique in so many ways. It was the re-birth of Olympic golf and is the only Olympic course on the planet. Not many courses book their place in golfing folklore so quickly, and knowing so few have been tested by its brilliance makes you savour the experience even more.

Located within the lush Marapendi Natural Reserve, the course has a North

American links feel to it. Designer Gil Hanse embraced the openness of the land and the stiff breeze is often a troublesome foe. The greens are firm, very large and mainly undulating, and when combined with the significant amount of bunkers and water, you'll find it unforgiving to the average golfer.

There are many memorable holes, like the par-5 10th, which requires three quality shots to find the green.

The staff are dedicated to promoting the game and ensuring that the Olympic legacy lives on. They are helped by having access to a world-class practice facility, which is as good a place to hone your game as the open-air clubhouse veranda is to relax and reminisce after an awe-inspiring day on the links.

SAO PAULO GOLF CLUB, SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

Founded in 1902 by British railway engineers and designed by Stanley Thompson and Robert Trent Jones, this place has serious pedigree. Regularly rated in the top five in Brazil, the



Sao Paulo Golf Club, Brazil

Golf Tour

course conditions match its historic credentials. Located in the heart of the city and surrounded by a bubbling metropolis, the course is a sparkling oasis.

Thompson was an artist, and this course is one of his masterpieces. It's a tight, surprisingly undulating parkland layout with water featuring regularly.

Established trees line the fairways and are a real feature – their vivid colours mean pleasant views in all directions.

Having hosted both the European and Web.com Tours, the course has proved a stern test of golf right up to tour level.

The 18th is a memorable finishing hole, with a lake looming menacingly by a green that resides directly in front of the clubhouse. My favourite hole was undoubtedly the par-3 9th. I've rarely seen a shot so intimidating yet aesthetically pleasing. The kidney-shaped green slopes from back to front and a lake awaits a poorly struck approach. Hit the green here and walk away with your head held high.

LOMAS DE LA DEHESA GOLF CLUB, SANTIAGO, CHILE

The landscape here is dominated by one overwhelming feature. Looming to the east, the imposing Andes mountains tower 23,000ft above sea level, creating one of the most breathtaking vistas in South American golf. The severity of the terrain is obvious and feels like it casts a shadow over the fairways below.

The quiet course allows plenty of opportunities to take in the panorama and enjoy the walk. Precision is king here, as length is not a problem. The course is a mere 6,300 yards and at an elevation of 25,000ft, the ball will fly half a club further than usual. Your score will be made from inside 100 yards. The greens can be slippery in summer and require care to avoid looking foolish.

For a signature hole, look no further than the 4th. The tee shot at this short par 4 will leave you feeling awestruck.



Beyond the fairway is the best view of the mountains on the course. In the foreground lies a lake littered by lily pads, with towering reeds encroaching on your shot line. Framing it all are two lines of coniferous trees trailing into the distance. Striping one off this tee will be your most satisfying shot of the day.

PENINA CHAMPIONSHIP COURSE, ALVOR PORTIMAO, PORTUGAL

I can recall few finer sights than the early morning view down the dew-soaked and misty 1st fairway at Penina. This course was the foundation stone around which Portuguese golf was built.

Picturesque and mostly flat, Henry Cotton's 53-year-old Championship course is captivating and well respected.

Cotton rewards straight shots and distance control rather than sheer brute force. Navigating your ball away from the ditches and lakes that punish stray shots is a task which is easier said than done. He planted numerous trees on the originally arable land to form avenues that leave you in no doubt about the direction to hit your ball. Resort courses can be slow, and often suffer from wear and tear. When I played, I found the course resisted both of these issues well.

A real belter of a hole, the 5th is a true risk-reward par 5. Driving long down the left is essential if you want the choice; go for the green in two across the lake or lay up and trust your wedge game.

Finishing with two reachable par 5s on the home straight, the course offers you a chance of scorecard salvation.



JW MARRIOTT MIRAGE CITY GOLF CLUB, CAIRO, EGYPT

Playing in the Middle East is a luxurious thing. The contrast between lush grass, endless desert and blue sky is a rich pallet on which to paint a golf course.

Home to ten million people, Cairo bustles endlessly, while Mirage City

is the polar opposite, exuding serenity. Egyptian golf dates back over 100 years, but Mirage City has only been open 18. Still, it's normally included in discussions of the best courses in Egypt. Nestling discretely between the mansions and lavish hotels of an affluent suburb, the imperious clubhouse looks like a tiny palace, sitting on the highest hill.



Mirage City: one of Egypt's best courses

Having hosted the Challenge Tour before and measuring 7,700 yards, the course isn't a simple walk in the desert. Water threatens constantly and the course particularly examines accuracy from the tee, with tight fairway landing zones designed to elevate the player's heart rate. Find the fairways, though, and you're rewarded with more generous approaches to most of the greens.

The heat can be oppressive and some drives to tees are extensive, so a buggy is advisable. I'd also recommend a GPS device to help minimise the jeopardy off the tee. Finally, take spare balls if you plan on employing your driver regularly.

Follow Alex on Instagram @elevation_golfing_nation and read his blog at elevationgolfingnation.wordpress.com

Penina's Championship course in Portugal



United Kingdom



The Brabazon's risk-reward 10th

STEEPED IN HISTORY

The Belfry remains one of England's most popular golf and leisure resorts

In golfing circles, The Belfry is most famous as host venue to four Ryder Cups between 1985 and 2002. This is a significant place in the history of the competitive game, and you get a sense of that when visiting.

Those memorable matches took place over The Belfry's Brabazon course. Designed by Dave Thomas and Peter Alliss, it's one of the UK's great inland stadium-style courses. With its well-positioned lakes, streams and bunkering, good course management is essential if you're to score well.

The greens are silky smooth and can become lightning-fast in the summer months. With a number of perplexing borrows to take into account, a good short game is required.

There are some highly recognisable holes on the Brabazon. The 10th is a

beauty; a short par 4 of just over 300 yards, where longer hitters (and fans of Seve Ballesteros) might be tempted to go for the green. The great Spaniard knocked it on here in the Hennessy Cup in 1978 and repeated the feat in the 1985 Ryder Cup. But it's not as simple as just hitting a long ball; the tee shot must be threaded through the trees and carry a water hazard to be successful. Then there's the superb, water-strewn 18th.



The Belfry's iconic clubhouse

A round on the Brabazon is a great experience. Not only is it a fine golfing test over an immaculately presented track, it also provides a chance to relive some great sporting memories.

There are two more courses at The Belfry. The PGA National is a fine championship course in its own right. It's been styled as an inland links, with slightly firmer fairways and greens, run-off areas, swales and deep bunkers.

The Derby course is a slightly shorter and more forgiving layout. It's a real parkland track that players of all standards will enjoy.

ESSENTIALS

Where to play

■ **W:** thebelfry.co.uk

A: Lichfield Road, Wishaw, Sutton Coldfield, B76 9PR

Stats: par 72, 7,118 yards (Brabazon)

GF: Variable rates and packages available booking online



WEST CLIFFS
GOLF LINKS



Home to Europe's best new course, WEST CLIFFS

Located less than an hour's drive north of Lisbon lies Praia D'El Rey, ranked within the top four golf resorts in Europe. There's a range of accommodation to choose from, including the five star Marriott hotel, the new Beachfront Apartments and traditional townhouses.

The golfing experience is truly outstanding, with the resort boasting two courses ranked within the top 100 best layouts in Europe. Praia D'El Rey is a mix of links and parkland course that provides spectacular views over the Atlantic Ocean.

Meanwhile, the new kid on the block, West Cliffs, is a stunning layout but can be fairly unforgiving if you're not on top of your game.

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ÓBIDOS, PORTUGAL | Play at Praia D'El Rey & West Cliffs



HOTEL MARRIOTT - LINK PACKAGE

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* per person sharing a double room

PRAIA D'EL REY APARTMENTS 4*

ÓBIDOS, PORTUGAL | Play at Praia D'El Rey & West Cliffs



THE VILLAGE APARTMENTS - LINK PACKAGE

7 NIGHTS | From € 387* Self-catering, 5 rounds. Per person in a T2 or T3 apartment, shared by 4 or 6. (between Praia D'El Rey and West Cliffs)

4 NIGHTS | From € 230* B&B, 3 rounds. Per person in a T2 or T3 apartment, shared by 4 or 6.

CONTACTS:

WEST CLIFFS, Óbidos - Portugal

golfreception@westcliffs.com | (+351) 262 249 880

www.westcliffs.com



United Kingdom

The Point at Polzeath and the North Cornwall coast beyond



CORNISH CRACKER



The superb eco-friendly apartments

Mike Harris visits the Point at Polzeath for a perfect family break

Think of golf in North Cornwall and the classic links at St Enodoc, Trevose, Bude and Perranporth spring to mind. But there's now a new destination on the map offering something a little different.

The Point at Polzeath opened in the mid-1990s as Roserrow Golf and Country Club, but like many golf clubs, Roserrow felt the squeeze during the recession and fell on hard times. In 2012 it was bought out of administration by Jeremy Davies, a self-confessed golf nut who had enjoyed a successful career in the city and was looking for a project to get his teeth into.

The transformation that Jeremy, his wife Eva and the team have achieved is hugely impressive, with both the golf course and the off-course operation, which includes accommodation and a health club, taken to a whole new level.

So dramatic has been the change that in 2017 The Point was awarded England Golf's 'Club Mark - Club Of The Year', which recognises stand-out examples of clubs that are going the extra mile.

When you visit the The Point it's easy to see why. The course, originally laid out by David Feherty, has benefitted from much recent investment and ongoing

remodeling work from Tim Lobb, and offers a fun test for all levels. From the tips it demands that you shape the ball from the tee to avoid well-placed bunkers and other hazards, but from further forwards you can open your shoulders, with some heroic drives to take on and a welcome lack of long rough.

Approach shots are inviting and the putting surfaces true, with subtle borrows to keep you on your toes. It's hard to pick out a best hole, but the 386-yard par-4 14th, where a meandering stream comes into play on both drive and approach, gets my vote. It may be usurped by the new par-3 7th due to open in spring 2020, though – a hole which plays uphill to a stunning green site reminiscent of Sunningdale Old's 4th.

There's much to do off-course, too, with a health club that features an indoor pool and well-equipped gym, plus tennis courts and an AstroTurf football pitch. A 20-minute walk one way brings you to the famous surfing beach at Polzeath, while 30 minutes the other way takes you to Daymer Bay on the Camel Estuary next to St Enodoc Golf Club.

Accommodation options are numerous, but the seven stunning

eco-friendly apartments are the stars of the show. Modern, spacious, well-equipped and each with a beautiful vista of the headlands at Polzeath, they feature big living areas with sliding doors and balconies where, armed with a refreshing beverage, one can while away a relaxing evening taking in the view.

All accommodation is self-catering, but the proximity of the relaxed clubhouse with its bar and upstairs restaurant may be more tempting, especially as the menu is packed with delicious, great-value crowd-pleasers, including sensational homemade pizzas and some of Cornwall's finest fish and chips.

Golf has long struggled to get things right when it comes to providing a modern leisure experience where the whole family feels welcome and excited. The Point at Polzeath may just have set a blueprint for the future.

ESSENTIALS

■ The Point at Polzeath

Course stats: par 72, 6,308 yards

GF: from £14 to £55

W: thepointatpolzeath.co.uk

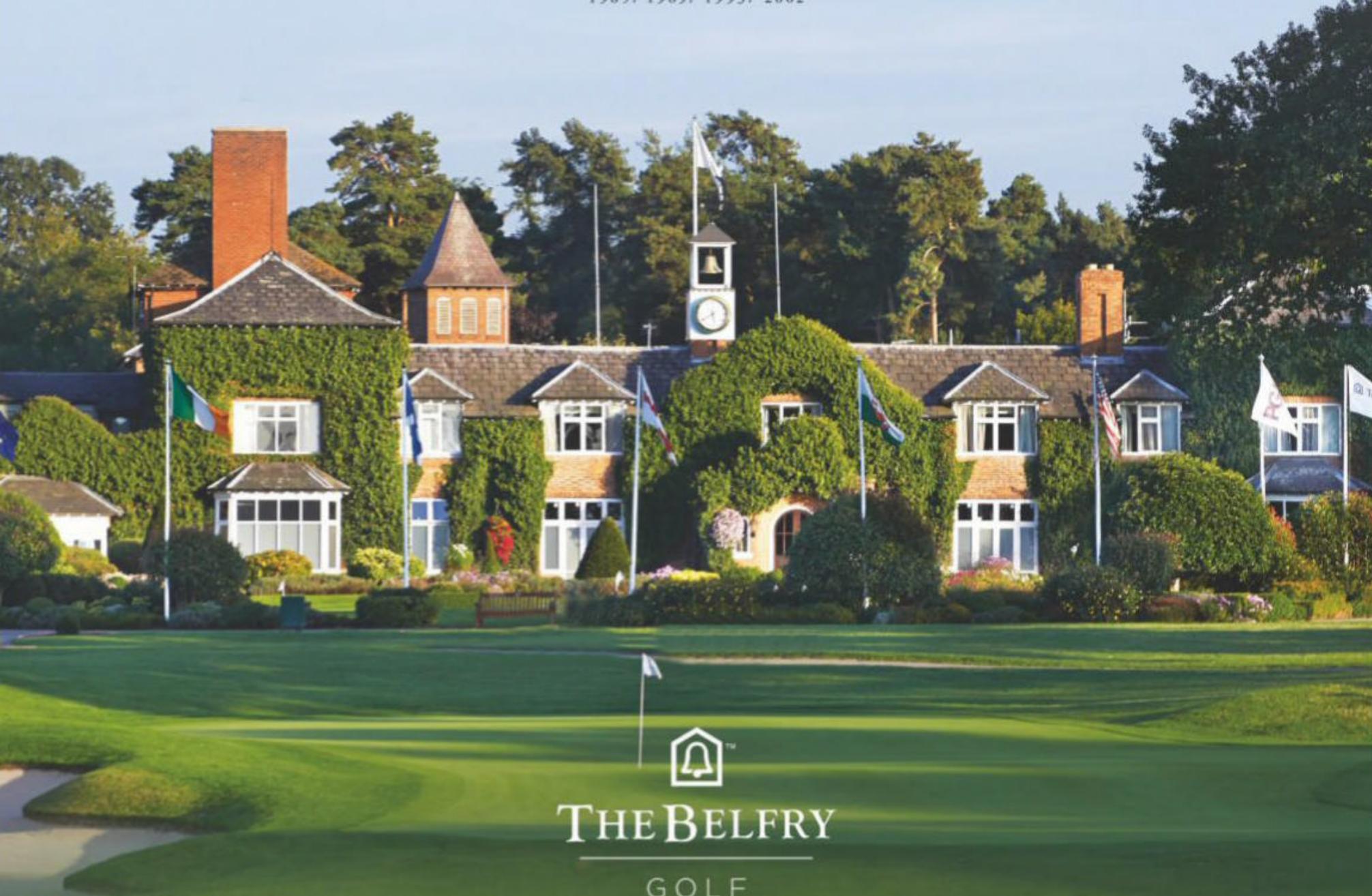
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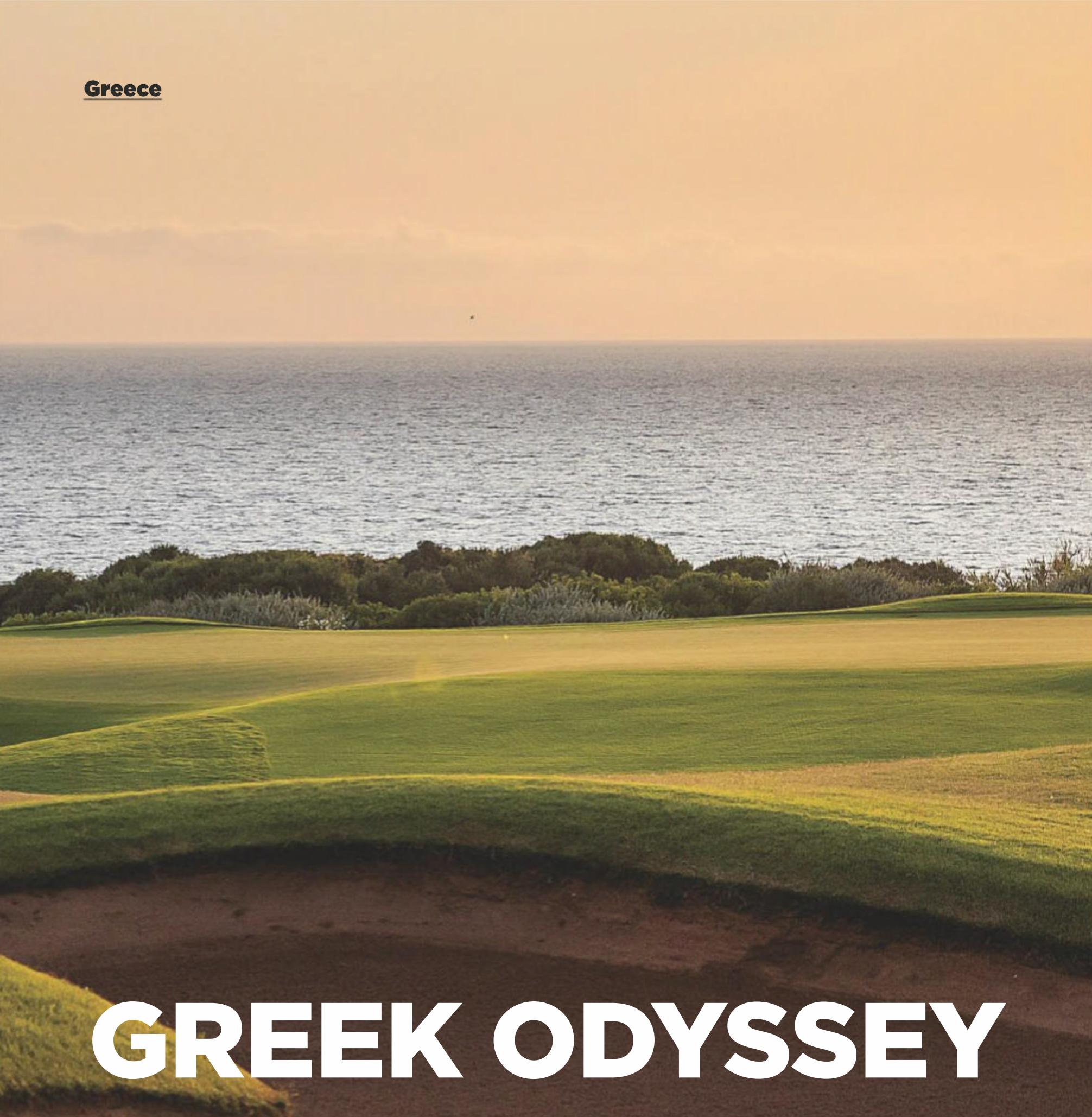


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GREEK ODYSSEY

Roderick Easdale immerses himself in all that Costa Navarino has to offer and learns about the resort's ambitious plans

Around of golf can lend itself to deep thoughts such as what is the meaning of life, why are so many golf shoes white, how come buildings aren't called built? For those who look to ponder the weightier questions of human existence walking through attractive surroundings, Costa Navarino is ideal for golfing and non-golfing philosophers alike.

Among the plethora of activities at this resort are philosophy walks, led by classical scholars, whereby you wander

and wonder through the countryside discussing "important modern-day issues through the prism of ancient Greek philosophical thinking".

Costa Navarino, which opened in 2010, was the brainchild of Captain Vassilis Constantakopoulos, who grew up in Messinia and made a fortune in shipping. Costa Navarino was conceived, in large part, to ensure the people of his home region have employment to allow them to remain in the area, and to preserve the local culture and landscape.

Sustainability underpinned his philosophy and at the resort is a well-presented museum, the Natura Hall, about the local flora, fauna and sea life, and ways to protect them.

LOCAL EXPERIENCES

The promotion of culture means activities on offer to guests include the chance to join locals in their homes to learn to cook the regional specialities; in August and September guests can observe – and even join in – with the wine harvest; from



The 2nd green on Costa Navarino's Dunes course

There's little rough to speak of on the Dunes



October to December comes the opportunity to engage in the olive harvest and olive oil making. Wine and olive oil classes run throughout the year, as do tours through the resort's botanical gardens, astronomy nights, art tours and embroidery workshops.

There are also more universally found resort facilities such as a beach, tennis courts, spa and a range of dining options, which here include an American diner with a three-lane bowling alley. For those who wish to explore the wider area, there are various bike tours, hikes and mountain climbs for all abilities.

Costa Navarino exists over two sites at present, with three more planned. The two hotels, the Westin – where we stayed

and which had friendly service and gorgeously comfortable beds – and the upmarket Romanos, are both at Navarino Dunes. Navarino Bay, about a quarter of an hour away by resort shuttle bus, already has a superb 18-hole golf course, with a hotel and new clubhouse under construction. A third site is being built at

Navarino Hills, which will have two golf courses and a hotel.

I was there for the Messinia Pro-Am, staged every February. The general consensus of the competitors was that the Dunes course was the better test and the Bay more enjoyable. Scores were higher on the Dunes – in round one, ➤



The Bay course enjoys glorious ocean backdrops

of the 31 pros, one carded 22-over-par and nine were double digits over par!

The main defences of the Dunes course are the many bunkers and the undulating greens on what is a fairly open track. Only the 2nd hole has an ocean backdrop, but several have an attractive inland view of distant rolling hills. When we played there was no rough to speak of, but in summer it is grown to 5cm. This, and the fact that the challenges and hazards are clearly set out from the tee, makes losing balls hard.

It can be done though. One of my opponents announced that he had only brought six with him, and having lost two in his first round, could he borrow two of mine. Adding to my list of mysteries of the universe to consider is what 20-handicapper goes on a trip involving several rounds on unfamiliar courses with only half a dozen golf balls? And why did he not visit the pro shop? But I could not ponder either of these questions while walking through the countryside, as the Bay course is buggies only.

The Bay course is a delight, with plenty of character, variety and splendid views – reminiscent of Alcanada in Mallorca on those holes when you play downhill towards the bay. There are some tight drives, and the putting surfaces are not



4th green on the Bay course

quite as bunker-fringed as on the Dunes, but several use swales around the green as a back-up protection.

The only time water appears inside the course is on the 1st, which is a crescent fairway around a lake, where you have to decide how much of the water to take on with your tee shot – how bold you are depends as much on ego as strategy on this short par 4. The order of the holes will change when the new clubhouse is completed, and the current 6th will become the opener.

MORE GOLF TO COME

You cannot stray from the tee as you can on the Dunes and the greens are just as fiendish, but the course is shorter. There are half a dozen par 3s, none of them long. The shortest is 122 yards from the tips, plummeting to a green protected and flanked by bunkers front, right and left. The longest par 3 plays over a valley to a green cut into the hillside, so that anything short runs back towards a ditch.

Two more courses are in construction at Navarino Hills on a hillside overlooking the bay where the Battle of Navarino was fought in 1827. It was the last battle to involve solely sailing ships and, in being won by the fleet of British, French and Russian ships, under British command, eventually led to Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire. The bar at the Westin is named 1827 and paintings of the battle adorn the hotel lobby.

The longer of the two courses here will cling to the higher ground and offer spectacular views over the bay from the closing holes. It is planned at around 7,300 yards and it is hoped to bring top professional events here. It is due to open in 2020 and its sister, which will run through forest, in 2021.

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

Kalamata, about 45 minutes from Navarino Dunes, has seasonal direct flights from London, Manchester and Birmingham. Athens, about three hours away, has direct flights from London, Manchester, Edinburgh and Bristol. Flight times from London to Athens are about three and three-quarter hours.

Where to Play

■ Navarino Dunes

Stats: par 71, 6,581 yards

■ Navarino Bay

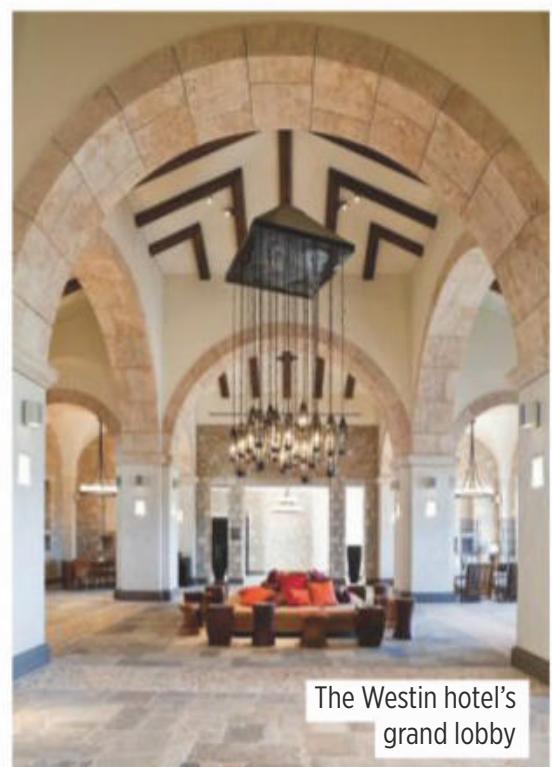
Stats: par 70, 5,931 yards

W: costanavarino.com

Where to Stay

■ The Westin at Navarino Dunes

W: costanavarino.com



The Westin hotel's grand lobby

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FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

The latest developments at La Reserva Club are helping to take Sotogrande to a whole new level for keen golf travellers



The new Beach Club opened last year

Sotogrande, a luxury destination in Andalucia loved by golfers worldwide, is a privately owned residential development dating back to 1962. It stretches from the Mediterranean 15 miles east of Gibraltar to the foothills of Sierra Almenara, midway between Estepona and Algeciras and not far from the point where Europe and Africa are at their closest in the Strait of Gibraltar.

Sotogrande has much to offer, with 12km of glorious sandy beaches and watersports for all, from kayaking, diving

and snorkelling to kitesurfing and wakeboarding. The elegant marina, created in the 1960s, is the first port for those entering the Mediterranean from the Atlantic and has a real buzz both day and night. Inland, there is plenty to do too, whether mountain biking, trekking, off-roading or, of course, golfing.

Golf arrived early in Sotogrande, with Robert Trent Jones Senior's Real Club de Golf Sotogrande created as the centrepiece of the estate in 1964. In recent times, the world-famous Valderrama has taken centre stage, with



The 15th is the longest par 3 at La Reserva Club

this highly regarded course hosting the European Tour's season-ending Volvo Masters for two decades, and, of course, that memorable 1997 Ryder Cup when captain Seve led his troops to victory.

Sotogrande boasts four golf courses in all, with these two joined by Almenara and the latest arrival, La Reserva Club, where Cabell B Robinson's course, which opened in 2003, has further bolstered Sotogrande's reputation as a golfing reputation. La Reserva Club has now developed into a diverse sports, golf and leisure facility at the heart of Sotogrande, where guests can also enjoy tennis, padel, horse-riding and polo to complement the many other activities available across the wider estate.

A NATURAL CREATION

The course at La Reserva Club enjoys a magnificent elevated setting over the higher ground, with Robinson, a former Robert Trent Jones Senior understudy, a firm believer that golf course design is more art than science. The layout fits seamlessly into the landscape, with the opener offering up a generous downhill

Words: Jeremy Ellwood Photography: Kevin Murray



The very attractive 17th at La Reserva Club

drive where the temptation may be to cut off more of the dogleg than is necessary. The following par 5 is a cracker visually, climbing gently to a shallow, raised green.

The 5th is the first of a cast of strong par 3s, most of which play downhill. You then arrive at an elevated tee gazing out towards the Mediterranean where you'll want to open your shoulders, for the further down the hole you are on this excellent par 5, the less nerve-wracking the final approach will be to a green that gets narrower towards the back and is flanked closely by a lake on the right.

The testing run for home starts with the long par-3 15th, which is very well protected by water tight left. You'll almost certainly be hitting one of the longest clubs in your bag here if you choose to play off the tips at 222 metres.

From May 16-19 this year, the Ladies European Tour will be paying a visit for the inaugural La Reserva de Sotogrande Invitational, with Sotogrande S.A. CEO, Marc Topiol, delighted to be bringing top-class women's professional golf to the area: "I think it is very important for us to support women's sports and women's golf. Sotogrande has been first in many things, and we are very proud in creating the first pro ladies' event in Sotogrande. I hope it lasts for a long, long time."

THE NEW BEACH CLUB

To enhance the facilities for members and guests, La Reserva Club opened The Beach last year. It is the only private beach in Spain and offers everything from soft white sand and sun loungers to a wonderful waterside restaurant, a beach boutique and an adults-only pool.

Bordering The Beach is a large sports lagoon where guests can enjoy a range of engine-free, and therefore quiet, watersports, from kayaking and paddle boards to Mirage Eclipse water bikes. This

beautiful man-made lake is surrounded by pathways with views out over the golf course and down to the Mediterranean.

The residential side remains important at Sotogrande, with the latest project one of the most intriguing. Christened 'The Seven', this unique development will eventually see seven contemporary residences laid out over a 12-hectare park on La Reserva's highest peak. To add to the appeal, seven leading architecture studios from around the world have been invited to each create one of the luxury residences. When complete, The Seven will feature the design creativity of not only Spain but also Brazil, Sweden, the UK, The Netherlands and Norway.

There may now be enough going on at La Reserva Club to keep you entertained for a week or more, but do find time to visit Sotogrande's wonderful La Marina and dine al fresco gazing out over the impressive yachts moored there – it's just a great place to pass the time.

ESSENTIALS

Where to play

■ La Reserva Club

Course stats: par 72, 7,051 yards

GF: €245-€280 per round

T: 0034 856 560 922

W: lareservaclub.sotogrande.com

Where to stay

■ Almenara, Sotogrande

T: 0034 956 582 054

W: hotelalmenara.com

How to get there

EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies to Gibraltar from Gatwick, Luton, Bristol and Manchester; BA (britishairways.com) flies from Heathrow. La Reserva Club is about half an hour north. Malaga airport is only an hour away too.

MAJESTIC MALLORCA



Relaxing at the Carrossa Hotel isn't very hard

Nick Bonfield finds that Carrossa is the ideal base for the island's golf courses

Mallorca has long been a popular holiday destination for Brits thanks to its accessibility, climate, gastronomy and landscape. Now there's another reason – the newly opened five-star hotel and spa at Carrossa.

The resort, an hour's drive from Palma airport found in the lush hillside, combines modern luxury and rustic charm on a plot that centres around a beautiful manor house. Carrossa sits in

splendid isolation in an area of rugged natural beauty, with first-class wining and dining, impressive accommodation options, a state-of-the-art spa and stirring views of the surrounding area – whether Mallorcan hillside strewn with trees and shrubs or the Bay of Alcudia.

INNOVATIVE CUISINE

The Carrossa restaurant prides itself on innovative Mediterranean cuisine, with subtle Asian notes enhancing a number of dishes. The food and wine list are wonderful. Elsewhere, the Badia bistro has fresh Mallorcan and internationally inspired creations, while the Oro bar serves a range of cocktails in a tastefully appointed setting where modern twists accompany the stone walls and arches.

There's also a bodega – a wine cellar with long, candle-lit tables ideal for wine tastings and events. In summer, you can enjoy BBQs on the idyllic terrace.

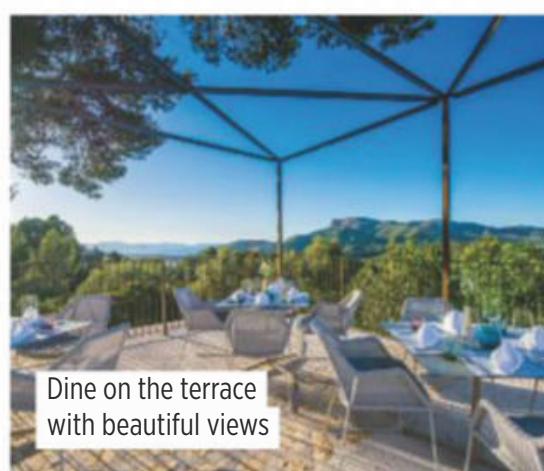
The stellar quality of the food and drink is matched by the accommodation.



The picturesque 18th at Capdepera

Thirty of Carrossa's 75 rooms and suites are situated in the Manor House, with the others a short walk away. There are four styles of suites to choose from – ranging from Junior to Superior. I stayed in the latter and was genuinely taken aback by the luxury décor and appointments, including the generous living room and furnished outside terrace. There are also eight private villas and 'fincas' dotted throughout the property, which sleep between four and ten people (depending on which you choose) and include swimming pools and manicured gardens.

It's very easy to while away the days at Carrossa. The spa features an indoor pool and a full range of massage treatments, while the infinity pool above the spa



Dine on the terrace with beautiful views

complex provides rousing views out towards Alcudia. Strolling through the hotel's grounds provides you with the sense of serenity one seeks from a holiday abroad. But for golf-lovers, the local offering is too good to miss...

Crucially, the hotel is less than a 15-minute drive from three of the island's golf courses and five can be reached in less than half an hour. On this occasion, we played Son Servera and Capdepera.

The former – a course often frequented by tennis star Rafael Nadal, who is from the island – is a tranquil and scenic layout with a stand-out stretch in the middle of the front nine. It's a track that places a premium on accuracy, with water, trees and barrancas waiting for errant shots.

SON SERVERA

Son Servera starts with a relatively gentle couple of par 4s before the 'pine trap' – a tricky, but picturesque five-hole stretch that evokes memories of Valderrama. It all started so well for me, courtesy of a 9-iron to two inches at the par-3 3rd, but I simply couldn't keep my ball in play over the next four holes – not ideal on a selection of holes named as such! That didn't detract from my enjoyment, though, as the holes are terrific. My favourite was the snaking uphill par-5 5th. But the 6th, which doglegs right to a beautifully framed green, and the 7th, a par 4 with a blind drive and an approach to a green sandwiched between water and a wall, both pushed it close.

The back nine boasts some noteworthy holes, including the water-laden stretch from 13 to 15 and the tough par-4 17th, where drives are hit downhill and approaches must carry a pond to a green where long is simply no good. There are some similarities between Son Servera and Capdepera in terms of variation, routing and the feeling of tranquillity.

On balance, Son Servera is probably the better golf course, but Capdepera pushes it close, thanks to the back nine.

CAPDEPERA

The front nine strikes a good balance between scorability and challenge, without, perhaps, anything to set the pulse racing. The back nine, however, takes things to another level.

It starts off with a risk-reward par 4 and a long par 3 – both played over water – before a brilliant uphill par 5. From the 13th, things become more enclosed as you play between trees up in the hills, with the par-3 15th then playing downhill to a must-hit green surrounded by steep hillside. But the fun doesn't stop there.

Back-to-back par 4s at 16 and 17 then come before the thrilling par-5 finale,

Capdepera's 15th: downhill to a must-hit green



Son Servera is both scenic and tranquil



where you drive over a deep, vegetation-strewn valley to a fairway flanked by a world of trouble on both sides.

There's also a large, sun-drenched terrace just to the side of the 18th. Once you've settled in, it's hard to leave!

Carrossa guests are also eligible for discounts at both Capdepera and Son Servera, as well as other local courses.

Carrossa is the perfect base from which to explore the island's golf offering, but you'd also be forgiven for staying on site. It's a truly first-rate hotel in a unique setting, without any of the pretentiousness that often accompanies such resorts. Tempted? You should be!

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

Fly to Palma from many UK airports.

Where to play

■ Son Servera

Course stats: par 72, 6,391 yards

W: golfsonservera.com

■ Capdepera

Course stats: par 72, 6,479 yards

W: golfcapdepera.com

Where to stay

■ Carrossa Hotel – **W:** carrossa.com

SHINING STAR

Jeremy Ellwood returns to Lumine's excellent 45-hole complex and beach resort, a short drive from Barcelona

I was pleased to get the chance to revisit Lumine Mediterránea Beach and Golf Community last year. The resort, which opened 11 years ago, lies about an hour from Barcelona in eastern Spain near the splendid city of Tarragona, where striking Roman remains abound, including a well-preserved amphitheatre.

Lumine is no stranger to top-class golf. Plenty of drama has unfolded here over the Hills and Lakes courses. The resort hosted the second stage of the European Tour Qualifying School for five years from 2012 before being promoted to a Final Stage venue in 2017.

Last year, Alejandro Canizares and Zander Lombard led the field to regain their tour cards, shooting six-round totals of 24-under. The two 18-holers are joined by the Ruins nine-holer, with the Lakes and Ruins designed by Greg Norman.

The Lakes is probably the tougher of the two Q-School layouts, with a significant amount of water to negotiate as you make your way round what's essentially a flat routing – weaving in and out of the Sequia Major wetlands.

The 7th is a cracker of a par 3 – not too long, not too short, but pretty much all carry over water. It becomes more dangerous the further left the pin is, and trickier still when it's also at the front.

Play for the fat of the green, perhaps, unless you're blessed with tour-pro skills.

The run for home will keep even those guys on their toes, as they seek to make it safely back to the clubhouse on the right side of the qualifying mark.

The 15th is a long, strong par 4 where there's water right to think about off the tee and water left on the approach, where it remains for the length of the long dogleg right-to-left par-5 16th.

The 17th is a great par 3 where any right-hand pins will be harder to get at, and the 18th, although another par 5, has water perilously close to the green.

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

I was able to get fully acquainted with the Hills layout this time, a course that contrasts with the Lakes, playing up on the higher ground though pine forests and olive groves and offering up a cracking view down to the Mediterranean. Water is still a feature, though less so than on the Lakes, and the holes you will most remember will probably be those where the greens are cut just below craggy, exposed rockfaces – the 13th, 17th and 18th. The final two are an interesting way to close out your round as both are short, risk-reward par 4s, the 17th doglegging sharply to the left and the 18th sharply to the right, so whichever way you move the ball you should enjoy at least one chance to attack right at the end.

The Hills clubhouse, open in the high season, is a great elevated spot to sit,

drink in hand, and watch others taking on that short but testing finale, placing bets on whether or not they can cope with the pressure of the water short left – even with only a short club in hand.

It would be remiss to leave out the Ruins nine, for while it's short, it's most definitely no pushover. The odd name comes from the 200BC Roman remains you see on its 1st and 9th holes, and after climbing early on, the 3rd is a worryingly

The Hills' 17th is a short, risk-reward par 4



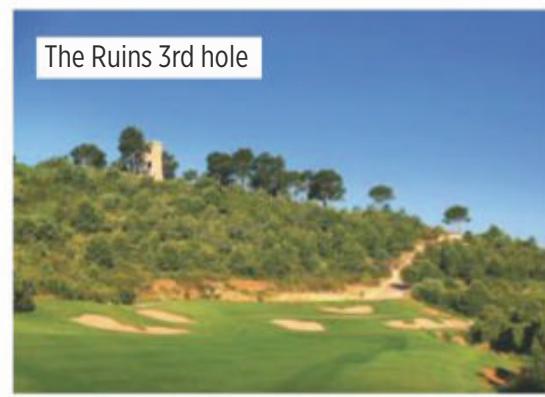
The Lakes' 7th is a cracker of a par 3



tight short par 4 with a raised, sloping green adding to the test. The 8th is then a standout par 3 where the green is not only dangerously close to water, but also has a bunker set into it Riviera-style, just as Norman did at Doonbeg in Ireland.

BEACH CLUB

If you get the opportunity to visit Lumine's very special Beach Club, you should seize the chance, for it's quite some beachfront property, littered with swimming pools and blessed with views to die for. Equally, a walk down to the port at Cambrils is a must. I found time on my final morning and can thoroughly recommend a stroll to the end of the harbour wall to gaze back across to the town through the masts of yachts worth millions of pounds, and marvel at how the other half lives.



ESSENTIALS

How to get there

There are flights to Barcelona-El Prat airport from many UK airports. Carriers include BA (ba.com). Lumine is then about an hour west near Tarragona.

Where to play

■ Lumine Hills

Course stats: par 72, 6,541 yards

■ Lumine Lakes

Course stats: par 71, 6,489 yards

■ Lumine Ruins

Course stats: par 34, 2,642 yards

Where to stay

Sol Port Cambrils Hotel, Cambrils

W: melia.com/en/hotels/spain/

W: costadaurada.info



SUCCESS STORY



The 4th at West Cliffs

We visit Portugal's Silver Coast nearly two years on from the much-heralded opening of the stunning West Cliffs

In the current climate, it's not every day that something very special indeed plants itself spectacularly on the golfing map, but that's exactly what happened two years ago when the highly acclaimed West Cliffs, on Portugal's Silver Coast not far from Lisbon, opened its gloriously natural fairways for the first time.

Created by Cynthia Dye, Pete Dye's niece, this wonderful course wends its way through more than 200 hectares of dramatic clifftop terrain with ocean views on every hole. The Silver Coast, an area of unspoilt natural beauty, already had a strong reputation with Praia D'El Rey – West Cliffs' sister course – already firmly on the radar of discerning golf travellers.

Now West Cliffs, and its burgeoning reputation, has added the killer blow that appears destined to make the Silver Coast one of Europe's premier golfing hotspots. The course was named World's Best New Golf Course at the 2017 World Golf Awards and is now regarded as one of the top two courses in Portugal among some very illustrious company.

The scale of the recent investment in the Praia D'El Rey Marriott Golf and Beach Resort is testament to the owners'

commitment to make this a truly special place. Over the past three years, a €4 million renovation has seen all bedrooms, common areas, restaurants, meeting rooms and the kids club upgraded to ensure the standards off-course match the reputation of the two magnificent golf courses.

When you factor in that the West Cliffs course has also enjoyed further investment since opening to raise the bar again, it's no surprise that visitor numbers have been strong at a time when others are finding the current climate particularly challenging.

It's certainly possible that West Cliffs' €82 green fee represents some of the best-value golf anywhere in Europe on a course that simply guarantees a truly memorable experience.

When you think that sister course, Praia D'El Rey, with its memorable oceanside back-nine stretch, was already ranked in Portugal's top ten and other fine newcomers like Royal Obidos and Bom Sucesso lie very close by, it's easy to see why Portugal's Silver Coast is rapidly becoming one of Europe's must-visit golfing destinations.

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

A number of airlines fly to Lisbon on a regular basis from a host of different airports across the country.

Where to play

■ West Cliffs, Obidos

Course stats: par 72, 7,003 yards

W: westcliffs.com

■ Praia D'El Rey, Obidos

Course stats: par 73, 7,100 yards

W: praia-del-rey.com

Where to stay

■ Praia D'El Rey Marriott Golf and Beach Resort, Obidos

W: praia-del-rey.com



Praia D'El Rey's back nine hugs the ocean

The 18th green
at Palheiro

MAGICAL MADEIRA

A tour of these spectacular islands unearths some golfing gems

Madeira does not immediately spring to mind when talk turns to European golfing destinations, but a growing number of UK tourists are discovering how much this archipelago has to offer. Situated 500km off the African coast, the average winter temperatures are 19-20 °C and there are three excellent courses within easy reach of the capital, Funchal.

Two of them – Santo da Serra and Palheiro Golf – are on Madeira itself, while Porto Santo lies a short hop away on the island of the same name – one of four making up this Portuguese archipelago.

Robert Trent Jones Snr's 1991 redesign of Santo da Serra – which dates originally from 1937 – created a spectacular 27-hole complex in a beautiful natural landscape, with views of Porto Santo and the bay of Machico, where Portuguese navigators first landed in 1419.

Seve's Porto
Santo creation

The Machico and Desertas nines form the 6,825-yard championship course, where the European Tour's Madeira Islands Open was held on 20 occasions. The 3rd and 4th on the Machico are regarded as the signature holes, sitting on cliffs over 2,200ft above the Atlantic. The 3,193-yard Serras course offers a delightful alternative, with lakes and mountain views along flatter terrain.

Palheiro Golf opened in 1993 and sits within the magnificent Palheiro Estate. The course borders the five-star Hotel Casa Velha do Palheiro and meanders through maritime pine and botanical woodland. It takes full advantage of Madeira's hilly terrain, with abrupt ridges and deep valleys.

A short, 20-minute flight – or a two-and-a-half hour cruise – will cover the 27 miles between Madeira and Porto Santo, where the golf course also hosted the Madeira Islands Open three times. This Seve Ballesteros creation opened in 2004 and comprises two distinct nines. The US-style southern loop is dotted with lakes; the northern loop sits atop more fantastic cliffs near a stunning beach.

A great way to golf here is to buy a Madeira Golf Passport – available from most hotels and the golf clubs – which provides five rounds across the two

'mainland' tracks. It's easy to get around this compact island too, and if you book a tee-time the golf club may well shuttle you between hotel and golf course.

Madeira's many other attractions are well-known, with its varied and dramatic landscape offering opportunities for mountain biking, paragliding, diving and trekking. When you add in three fine courses designed by some of the biggest names in the game, you can see why Madeira's reputation as a golfing hotspot is growing so rapidly.

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

Madeira is less than a four-hour flight from most UK airports, with several airlines offering direct flights to Funchal.

Where to play

■ Palheiro Golf

W: palheironatureestate.com

■ Porto Santo Golfe

W: portosantogolfe.com

■ Santo da Serra

W: santodaserragolf.com

For more information, visit
madeiraallyear.com



THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

Fancy the Algarve? Quinta do Lago's the sweetspot, says Michael Weston

The number of top-class golf destinations clustered in and around Portugal's southern region can cause a headache. Let's make it easier for you. Quinta do Lago has everything you could want in a golf break and more. Surrounded by 2,000 acres of the picturesque Ria Formosa Natural Park, this luxurious resort offers guests access to its three beautiful and highly regarded courses, as well as a wide range of indoor and outdoor leisure activities.

Once you touch down at Faro Airport and hop on board your hotel transport,

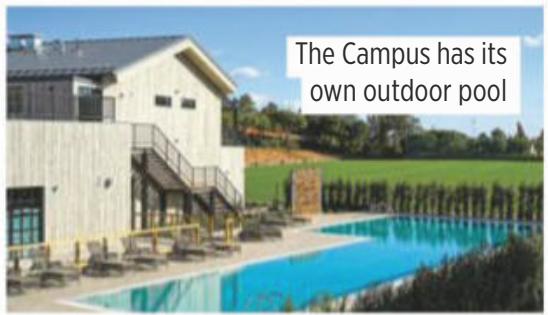
you'll be cruising past lush fairways and perfectly manicured greens in under 15 minutes. Alluring as those flashes of green are, keep your eye out for a few restaurants along the way to visit later.

TREMENDOUS TRIO

First up, the South course opened for play in 1974 and remains the crown jewel of Quinta do Lago. It's the work of American architect William Mitchell whose American standard tees and bunkers gained the venue instant recognition. The Portuguese Open has been played here on eight occasions,

Colin Montgomerie tasting victory on the South in 1989. Despite its championship pedigree, the course isn't designed to exclude amateur golfers. The challenge lies in finding the fairways. Going out, the holes weave through parkland before a testing back nine that loops around a lake, where you're treated to some beautiful views out across the water.

The North course was redesigned in 2014 by Beau Welling and Paul McGinley, whose state-of-the-art Academy is also on site, as is the TaylorMade Performance Centre. The multi-million pound investment has strengthened the layout, with the emphasis firmly on precision



The Campus has its own outdoor pool



Course management needs to be flawless on the North course



Laranjal has plenty of water in play



Enjoy tennis at The Campus

and strategy. As superb as the bunkering is, you'll need your course management to be spot on to avoid spending the day playing recovery shots from the sand.

Completing this fine trio, Laranjal is located two kilometres to the east of the resort. You may need to negotiate a couple of narrow lanes to find it, but it's an absolute gem. Routed through orange groves, Laranjal was designed by Portuguese architect Jorge Santana da Silva and opened for play in 2009. The course has since gone from strength to strength, and its putting surfaces rank with the best in the Algarve.

There are no hidden surprises down the 1st, and long hitters may even be tempted to give the green a go at the par-4 2nd. On to the 4th and the first par 5 is a cracker. Be careful not to leak your drive too far right as water is lurking, while some huge bunkers will gather tee shots pulled to the left.

The view from the elevated tee at the par-4 5th is stunning, but your driving accuracy will be tested to the limit, especially if you're playing into the sun.

Onto the par-5 6th – and tall pines flank the long fairway to the left and right as well as a series of large bunkers. When water comes into play at Laranjal, it's more obvious than some of the bunkers, which are often far larger than they appear from the tee. A lake looms large on the par-3 15th, before more water at the par-5 16th, all of which makes this course a tough test to the very last shot.

MIAMI STYLE

The Magnolia Hotel, which pays homage to Miami's iconic motels, is the place to stay. With a heated outdoor salt-water pool, tennis court, cocktail bar, spa and cinema, it's the perfect place to relax when you're not golfing.

Why not head down to The Campus? It's a new high-performance centre created for elite athletes. Fancy something more leisurely? There's cycling, kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding.

You'll leave Quinta do Lago feeling fit and refreshed, perhaps even with a couple of extra goals besides lowering your handicap, especially if you visit The Campus. Before you do so, be sure

to refuel at Bovino, the most exclusive steakhouse experience in the Algarve.

Elsewhere, the Michelin-recommended Casa Velha restaurant serves authentic and classic cuisine, and on the lake's edge, seafood lovers should book a table at Casa do Lago. Don't want to miss the evening's live action? Head to Dano's, the resort's first sports gastropub, where you can enjoy delicious food and craft beer.

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

Faro Airport is well served by flights across the UK, and is just a 15-minute drive from Quinta do Lago. The Magnolia Hotel offers guests transfer services.

Where to play

■ North course

Course stats: par 72, 6,725 yards

■ South course

Course stats: par 72, 7,040 yards

■ Laranjal

Course stats: par 72, 7,083 yards

W: quintadolago.com

Where to stay

■ The Magnolia Hotel

W: themagnoliahotelql.com



The South course's front nine weaves through parkland

BEST OF THE WEST

Jeremy Ellwood heads to the western Algarve to play all 27 holes at Onyria Palmares plus a newer course at Espiche

The Praia nine is more linksy in nature

I've played several Algarve courses over the years, but my most recent Portugal trips had been to Lisbon, and it was many years since I'd visited the western end of the region. So it was great to do just that as autumn turned to winter last year, especially as it would be to play two courses I'd not previously visited – the 27-hole Robert Trent Jones Junior complex at Onyria Palmares and then Espiche Golf, several miles away.

The original Palmares course, midway between Alvor and Lagos, was one of the first on the Algarve, but Trent Jones was brought in not only to extend the layout



from 18 to 27 holes, but to take fuller advantage of the potential for near-permanent glorious sea views.

He succeeded – with all three nines starting on the high ground, descending



The Lagos nine has more of a heathland feel

towards the beach, then climbing back up at the end. The more linksy Praia nine flanks the beach when it crosses the railway for a four-hole stretch after an extraordinary downhill, dogleg-right opener – where it's possible for a driver and 5-iron to end up in the same place off the tee.

We played the Alvor nine first, which has more of a parkland feel, and climbs a little over its opening trio before making a dramatic descent towards the distant town of Alvor on the 4th and 5th. Both of which are probably a little more generous than they appear.

The climb back to the clubhouse at the end is rather steep, with the 9th playing considerably longer than its yardage.

LAGOS NINE

The Lagos nine, where the feel is more heathland, plunges down from the outset towards the Ria of Alvor, with the 3rd a very pretty par 3 to a raised green. The second par 3 on this nine is then brutally long off the tips at 250 yards, and merely very long off the yellows at 220 yards.

The penultimate hole boasts the best-looking drive here – a dogleg right from a gloriously elevated tee with large sandy waste areas both sides and lots of good strategic bunkering.

Praia was my favourite nine given its links credentials, with the 4th and 5th the pick of the beachside holes over the railway. The former is a big par 5 with waste areas all around and testing run-offs both long and short of the green; the latter is a strong par 3 played from a very narrow tee strip stretching back almost as far as you like into the dunes.

Avoid the sandy mounds flanking the fairways over this stretch at all costs. After crossing back over the railway, you come to two excellent risk-reward short par 4s where you must thread your way past mounds. The first of the duo boasts a split fairway that's accommodating on the right, but less on the more direct left.



Espiche's 9th with the 6th beyond

Espiche Golf, which opened in 2012, has a quite superb modern clubhouse gazing down over a course defined by greens that slope from back to front early on, before giving way to several two-tiered or kidney-shaped greens as you make your way home. The down-and-up 1st is dauntingly tight, but widens out a little if you can get it far enough down there. I enjoyed the 4th, where you can take it over a white building on the corner off the yellow tees, but face a much tighter landing zone off the tips.

FINEST-EVER EAGLE

The tough par-5 10th treated me kindly, probably as I didn't know how difficult it was! Even my fade right of the marker post on the crest only just stayed in play on the left, but from here I conjured up a 3-wood to three feet for one of my finest-ever eagles. Good holes continue all the way to the 18th, where the aim is to stay clear of the lake on the right.

We ate in two excellent restaurants – Campimar on the first night, where the grilled golden bream (dourada) was a treat, and Dom Sebastiao in the old walled city of Lagos on the final night.

In between, we enjoyed the Eating Algarve city walking/gourmet tour starting from the old fort in Lagos, going off the beaten track. Treats included Dom Rodrigo, a dessert made from egg yolk and Medronho, a lively Portuguese spirit.

Overall, I had a splendid trip and got a taste for both the history of the region and the range of traditional fare on offer throughout this part of the Algarve.

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

Faro airport in the Algarve is well served from the UK via regular flights from London with easyJet (easyjet.com), BA (ba.com) and Jet2 (jet2.com)

Where to play

Onyria Palmares, Lagos

■ **Alvor nine**

Course stats: par 36, 3,668 yards

■ **Lagos nine**

Course stats: par 36, 3,460 yards

■ **Praia nine**

Course stats: par 36, 3,247 yards

■ **Espiche Golf, Lagos**

Course stats: par 72, 6,410 yards

Where to stay

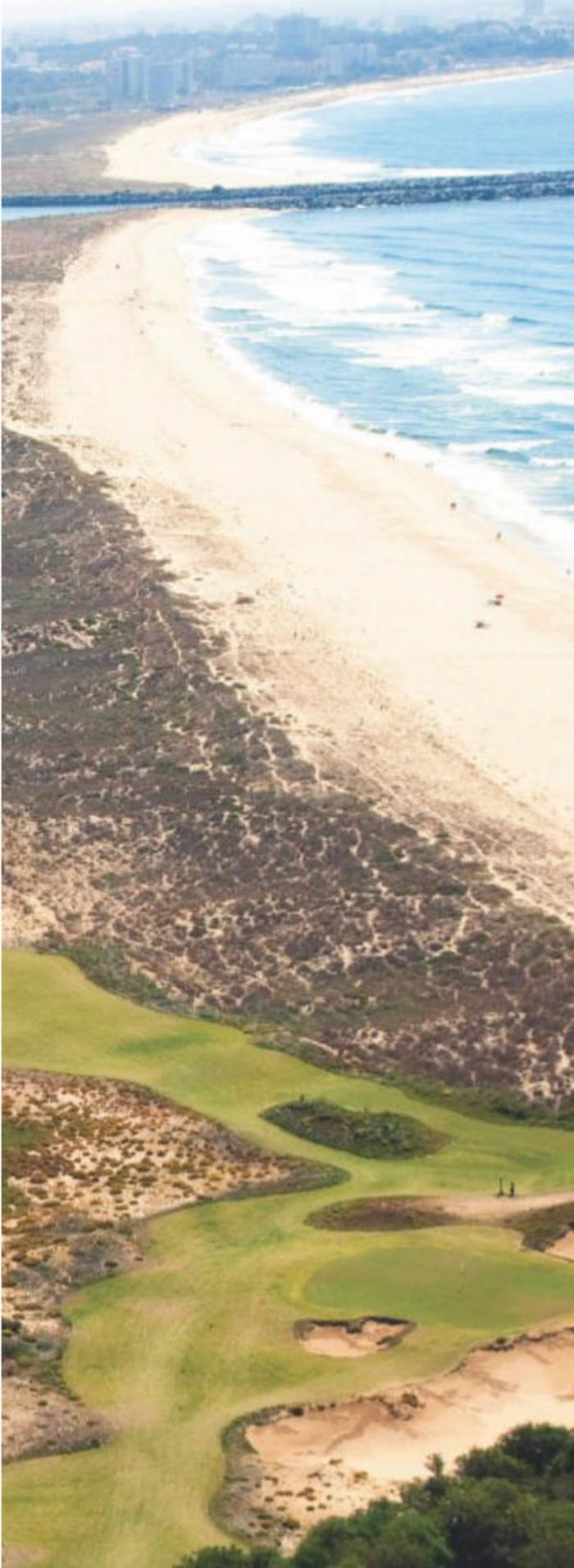
Belmar Spa & Beach Resort, Lagos

W: belmarresort.com

■ **Beach House Hotel, Onyria**

Palmares, Lagos

W: onyriapalmare.com



HEAVEN ON EARTH



The very pretty 2nd hole with the sea beyond

Sam Tremlett makes his Italian golfing debut at the superb Argentario Golf Resort and Spa near Orbetello in Tuscany

Thanks to the 2022 Ryder Cup and the rise of Francesco Molinari, Italy and golf have fast become a quality pair. The incredible natural beauty and wonderful weather mean you really should start to think of Italy as a golfing destination. I found this out after visiting Argentario Golf Resort and Spa on my very first press trip for *Golf Monthly*.

The course, which dates from 2006, was designed by architect David Mezzacane and professional golfer Baldovino Dassu. The holes were then shaped by Brian Jorgensen. It has also been awarded the Agri Cert certification for its bio eco-compatibility, and all products used for its maintenance are completely natural.

I was excited to get going on this par-71 course measuring 6,800 yards off the back tees, and the 1st offered a fairly innocuous start before things quickly kicked up a gear. The 2nd is a long par-3 at 194 yards, and with seven bunkers and a view of the sea to the right, it looked very pretty indeed.

The par-5 6th is the next hole of note as its tees were

built up onto a steep hill giving a stunning view out towards the town of Orbetello. The short par-4 7th was then Italy's version of the 18th at TPC Sawgrass, with the 200-yard par-3 8th probably the hardest hole of all.

ALL-ROUND PERFECTION

At the end of my round it dawned on me what huge fun it had been. No two holes looked the same, the greens were true and quick, the scenery was beautiful, and at times it was just so peaceful.

Non-golfers need not fret for there is much for them to get stuck into too. On the lower floor of the dragonfly-inspired hotel there is a spa, two large swimming pools (indoor and outdoor), hot and cold pools, a well-equipped gym and a sauna.



The nearby towns of Porto Ercole and Porto Santo Stefano are also short drives away and have an air of Monaco about them, especially when the sun is shining. To sum up, the golf was sublime and challenging, the food delicious, the room comfortable and the service excellent. You will not be disappointed if you choose to pay a visit to Argentario.



Looking out over Argentario's front nine

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

Fly in to Rome-Fiumicino International Airport, which is a 90-minute drive from Argentario.

Where to play and stay

■ **Argentario Golf Resort and Spa**
W: argentariogolfresortspa.it

A TUSCAN TREASURE



La Bagnaia Golf & Spa Resort provides the golfing experience of a lifetime

Italy's reputation as a golf destination has grown rapidly in recent years, and the announcement that the 2022 Ryder Cup will be heading to Rome has given its golf facilities a further boost.

One such course is the stunning Royal Golf La Bagnaia, part of the La Bagnaia Golf & Spa Resort in Siena, Tuscany.

Surrounded by the beautiful Sienese countryside, La Bagnaia is a tranquil oasis set against a landscape scattered with charming medieval hamlets and towns.

The course, designed by the award-winning architect Robert Trent Jones Jnr, opened in 2009. It runs over the rolling

Siena hills, offering undulating fairways and sweeping fescue roughs.

RELAXING VIEWS

Expansive practice facilities include a short game and pitch-and-putt area, and the clubhouse – a painstakingly restored Tuscan farmhouse – overlooks the 18th green, providing golfers with an authentic and luxurious place to relax and enjoy the views towards ancient Siena while sampling the finest Tuscan ingredients and produce.

Spread over 1,100 hectares, the upscale Curio by Hilton hotel has a village-like feel, divided across a number of buildings and featuring two main 'hamlets' – Borgo Bagnaia and Borgo Filetta. The resort includes the luxurious Buddha Spa by Clarins and a range of facilities for leisure and business travellers, including two restaurants and two bars, three swimming pools, 12 treatment rooms, a tennis court and conference rooms for nearly 1,000 delegates.



The resort is close to international airports, with excellent car, bus and rail links. It is 95km from Florence Peretola Airport and 130km from Pisa International Airport, both of which provide regular domestic and international flights.

Siena-Ampugnano Airport is only 11km away, while Siena's main railway station is 30km from the resort and caters for national rail services. The stunning medieval Siena is easily accessible by car and well worth at least a day trip.

La Bagnaia is also part of IMG Prestige, an elite network of premier golf properties and partners from across the world which have a close association with IMG.

ESSENTIALS

Where to play

■ **Royal Golf La Bagnaia**

Course stats: par 72, 6,672 yards

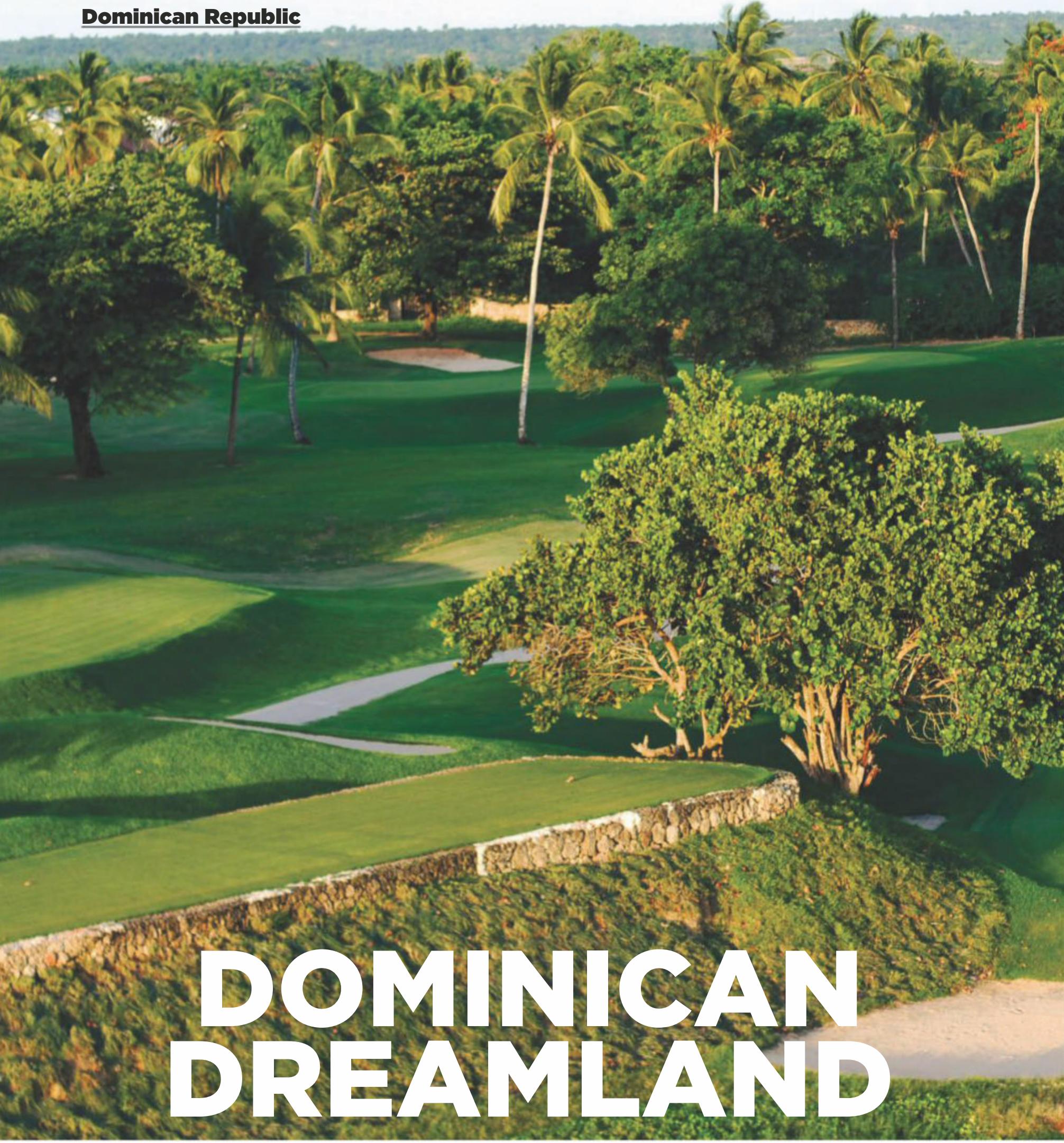
W: royalgolflabagnaia.com

Where to stay

■ **La Bagnaia Golf & Spa Resort**

W: curiocollection3.hilton.com





DOMINICAN DREAMLAND

Casa de Campo's 'Teeth of the Dog' is one of the world's true bucket-list courses. Rob Smith ticks a very big box...

As frosts and snow hit the UK in January, I managed to put a huge smile on the faces of friends and family by heading off to the Caribbean for a week! My mission? To report on the Latin America Amateur Championship (LAAC), one of

the most important events in the golfing calendar. While this was lure enough, the prospect of staying and playing at Casa de Campo in the Dominican Republic really sealed the deal.

Since I topped my first-ever drive and developed a fledgling interest in golf

courses, the Teeth of the Dog has been on my radar. The title sticks in the mind, but when you factor in its exotic location and that it's regularly in the lists of the world's 100 best courses, it's even more enticing. Add that it was designed by legendary golf-course architect ➤



Pete Dye of Kiawah Island, TPC Sawgrass and Whistling Straits fame, and a visit here becomes unmissable.

Before getting to try this and the other two courses that are open to the public, I enjoyed posting a number of reports about the LAAC on the *Golf Monthly* website. This gave me the chance to walk the course and see some of golf's future stars in action – clear evidence that the aim of the tournament organisers to grow the game really is working. ▶



Dominican Republic

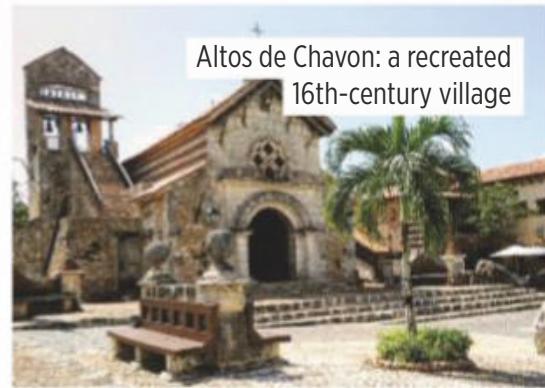
The resort sprawls over a massive 7,000-acre estate that's home to 90 holes of golf, of which 27, La Romana, are for members only. There is a fine hotel, a marina and beaches, restaurants and bars, luxurious housing and all manner of sporting endeavour. Formerly part of an enormous sugar plantation, Casa de Campo opened almost half a century ago and has been a playground to the rich and famous ever since. Happily, despite its glamorous reputation, there are packages available that offer surprising value for a resort of this fantastic quality.

TEETH OF THE DOG

The star of the show here, quite naturally, is the amazing Teeth of the Dog. Named after the jagged coral that rises from the sparkling sea, the course opened for play in 1971 and was beneficiary of a substantial upgrade about 15 years ago. This is a breathtaking layout where a

picture paints a thousand words. There are seven holes that run along the oceanside, and it's these that get the golfer drooling and cameras clicking.

In a way, it's also the course's problem as some people feel disappointed that the other 11 holes don't quite compare. I think they're wrong for two reasons. Firstly, the 'seaside seven' are so awesome that nothing could match them. Secondly, most of the inland holes are extremely good in their own right.



The front nine runs in a clockwise loop to the east, with the opening four holes inland and tempting glimpses through the palm trees of the ocean beyond. I particularly liked the right-to-left 2nd with its bunkering lined by old wooden fenceposts, and the par-5 3rd played up to an elevated green with run-offs.

From the stunning 5th, you hug the Caribbean Sea for four holes. In my case, a little too closely as I managed to lose my only ball of the round by missing the bunker on the left by a foot.

The next is a lovely driving hole over the shoreline, the 7th a picture-perfect par 3 over the ocean and the 8th a tricky par 4 along the water's edge to a green fronted by a deep, hidden bunker and with an even deeper run-off on the right.

In contrast, a more routine par 5 takes you back to the clubhouse for drinks.

The back nine runs anticlockwise, which again means you play the inland



holes first. The 10th crosses an old irrigation channel, the next two take you to the western edge of Casa de Campo and the closing six holes are all crackers.

The short 13th is played to a plateau green completely surrounded by sand, and the final par 5 that comes next has sand all the way on the right, a beautiful lake and a green framed by magnificent trees. Wildlife was plentiful. On this hole I saw woodpeckers, wading birds and egrets. The next three follow the shore, with two tough par 4s either side of another fabulous par 3. Do not go right! The closing hole takes you back up a gentle slope and to a drink on the terrace.

Although I went for a look, I wasn't brave enough to play from anywhere near the back tees, but it became all the more impressive how the winner of the LAAC, Alvaro Ortiz, had managed to play his four rounds in 14-under. The work being done by its organisers – The R&A,



The Masters and the USGA – really does seem to be paying off in spades.

DYE FORE

So vast is Casa de Campo that it takes several minutes to transfer from the hotel



up to the 27 holes at Dye Fore. These terrifically different holes are situated up in the hills overlooking the deep gorge through which the Chavon River has carved its way. The first 18 were designed in 2002, over 30 years after Teeth of the Dog, with the Lakes nine added in 2011. The original two loops are now known as Chavon and Marina, and they are packed with interesting, undulating, exciting golf.

Never too narrow, the challenge comes from the elevation changes, thrilling carries over impenetrable jungle, imaginative bunkering and not being distracted by the glorious views. If ever there's a course built to make you smile, this has to be the one.

While you're up here, it's well worth spending a little time at Altos de Chavon, the resort's authentic reconstruction of a 16th-century Mediterranean village, complete with various dining options, arts and crafts and even boasting its own 5,000-seater amphitheatre! It crowns a breathtaking, unforgettable spectacle.

THE LINKS

On my final day before flying home, I had time for a round on the Links, something completely different yet again. This is far more the resort course and suitable for golfers of all standards. It's nonetheless still great fun, especially the back nine. The stretch from 12 to 16 all run over and round (and in my case, into) water.

So there it is – a quite wonderful golfing and general holiday destination with a bucket-list course, 45 more very enjoyable holes and more than enough to keep anyone happy. I feel immensely lucky to have played Teeth of the Dog, and while I know that Casa de

Campo is at the higher end of the price list for golfing destinations, you get what you pay for. The food, accommodation, service, location and golf are sublime. This really is golf in paradise.

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

BA (ba.com) has direct flights from Heathrow to Punta Cana three times a week taking 8-9 hours. Transfer time: 1hr.

Where to play

■ **Casa de Campo**

Dye Fore: 27 holes

■ **The Links**

Course stats: par 71, 6,664 yards

■ **Teeth of The Dog**

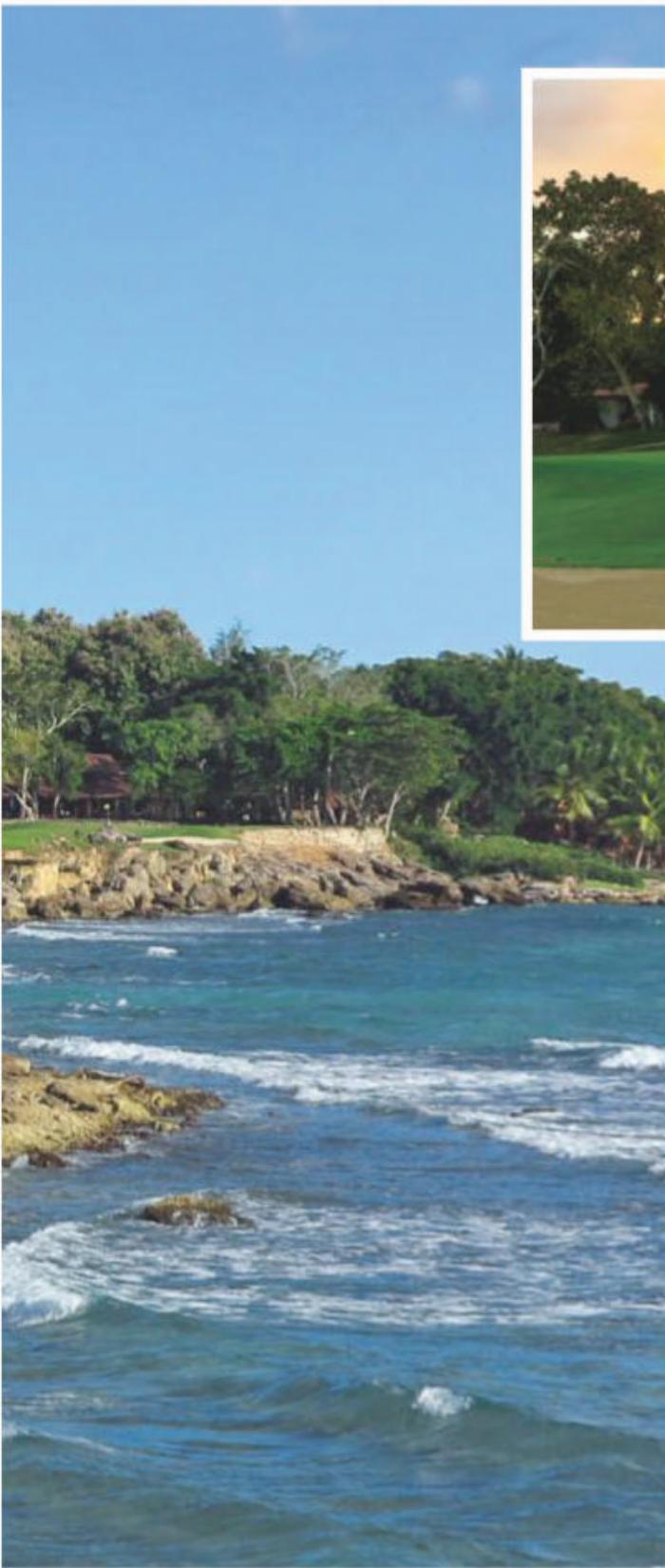
Course stats: par 72, 6,485 yards

W: casadecampo.com.do/golf

Where to stay

■ **Casa de Campo**

W: casadecampo.com.do/resort-villas



St Kitts

GOLF IN PARADISE

What could be better than a few rounds in St Kitts and Nevis?

Nothing, it turns out, writes James Mason



Four Seasons Nevis:
simply stunning



You're never far from a sea view at St Kitts



The back nine at St Kitts has spectacular views

It's 6am and I'm chipping ice off the windscreen of my car. My hands may be freezing but the grin on my face stretches from ear to ear, because I know that later today I'll be sitting by a pool in St Kitts with a cocktail in my hand, maybe flicking through the course planner of Royal St Kitts Golf Club in preparation for the annual Admirals Cup Pro-Am tournament – although there are several other tournaments running throughout the year that you can enter.

After a brief stop-off in Antigua – the English cricket team are touring out here, so quite a few fans are on the flight heading out to watch the test matches – I finally exit the plane. As I leave, the beautiful warm Caribbean air hits me and the memory of frozen fingers melts away.

ROYAL ST KITTS GOLF CLUB

I hit some practice balls, then meet the Admirals Cup Pro-Am team before smashing my driver down the first. It's a great opening par 5 which gives you a birdie chance as long as you steer clear of the water down the right-hand side.

The 3rd is a great little hole that doglegs to the right and has the amazing Caribbean Sea as a backdrop to the green. The 4th hole is the first of five par 3s on the course, and from the tips, two of them are over 230 yards across water and two others are over 190 yards. The 15th is the shortest at 161 yards and plays downhill with the Atlantic Ocean visible behind it. What a spectacular sight.

The front nine has some really strong holes, but the back nine will take your breath away. It all starts at the 591-yard 11th hole when you get your first glimpse of the Atlantic Ocean in the distance. The 12th is the longest of the par 3s at 236 yards, and from the tips it's a big carry over the water. The 13th and 14th are great holes, but the 15th, 16th and 17th is where you'll be getting your camera out the most. These are truly spectacular with the ocean playing a leading role – running along the left-hand side of the fairway on the 16th and 17th, with the latter sitting on a little peninsula.

The 18th brings you back to the clubhouse, and while it doesn't have the drama of the ocean, it has water running down the right with the green jutting into it. This is a tough, fitting finale to a tricky course set in beautiful surroundings.

FOUR SEASONS NEVIS

It's a shotgun start to day one of the tournament and we're in our buggy on the way to the 15th hole. We climb the fairway and jump out and everyone turns to look back downwards. You may not have heard that, but my jaw has just hit my knees. The view beyond the fairway is out to the glittering blue Atlantic Ocean with yachts and boats both large and small bobbing up and down.

So many words come to mind, but don't really do this moment justice – it's something you have to experience yourself. The hole is a par 5 of 663 ➤



The 17th hole at St Kitts is a scenic wonder

yards from the championship tee and runs all downhill, so you're better off using a 3-wood or hybrid as you'll be getting plenty of run. Hitting the fairway is far more important than distance.

But let me put you back into sync and start from the 1st – it's another par 5 and gives you a chance to open up with a birdie. The 2nd is a photo opportunity but for different reasons. Visible behind the tee is an old stone monument that sits perfectly in its surroundings. The 3rd is a nice par 3 over water, bringing you to the 4th that takes you back towards the mountain – which today sees the tip surrounded in mist and is nearly as impressive as those sea views.

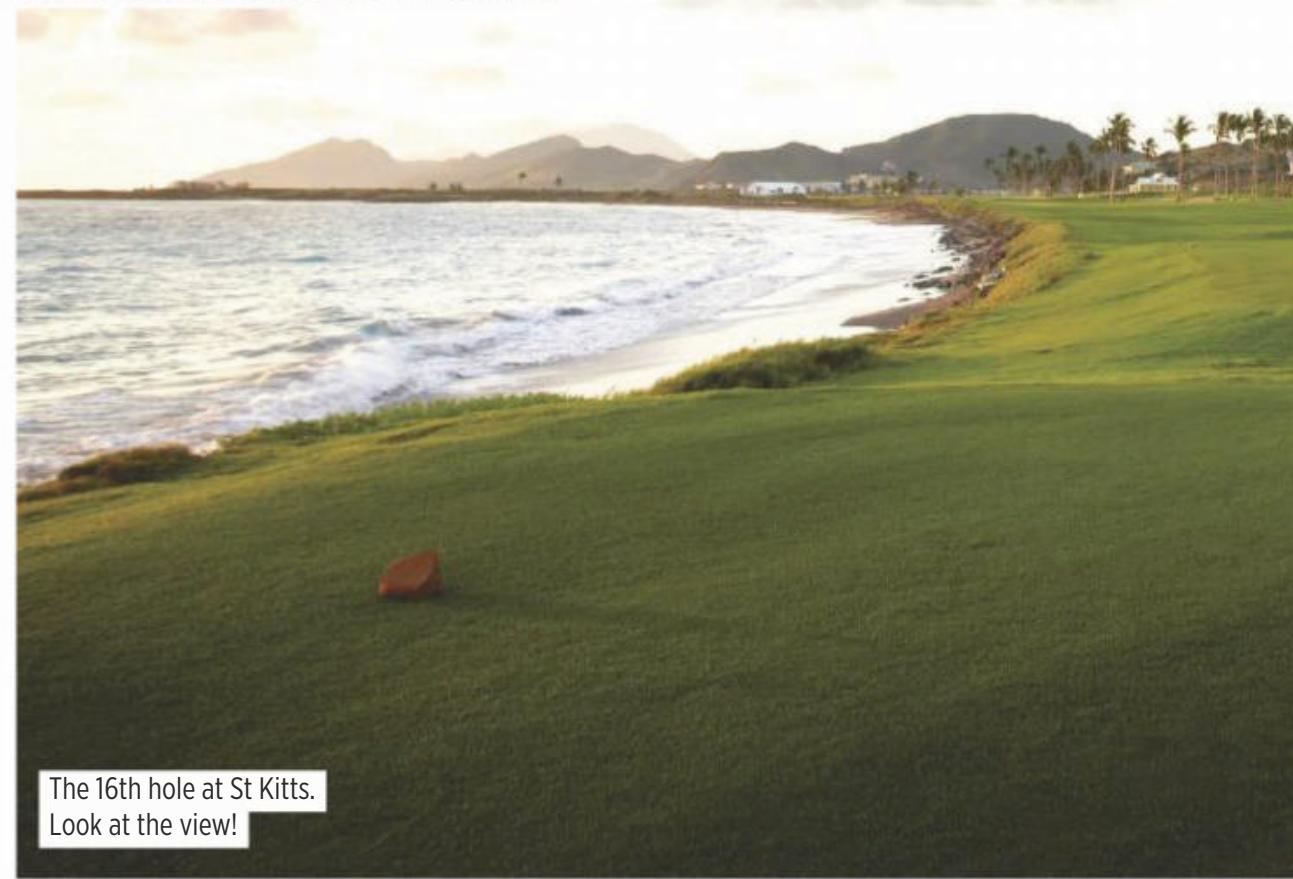
MONKEY BUSINESS

It's the easiest thing in the world to let yourself become captivated by the jaw-dropping ocean and mountain views, but the other fun distraction is watching the monkeys at play – especially the baby ones as they fight and wrestle with each other along the side of the fairways.

The course's view-tastic design has a fitting finale that starts on the par-3 14th, which looks out to the ocean. Then there's the 15th – as I mentioned earlier – that leads to another par 3 taking full advantage of the oceanic vistas.

The 17th is a tough short par 4, but watch out for the large storm drain that lurks in the landing area. The designers have used local rocks to help make a practicality into a feature of the course.

If the 15th is the signature hole, then the 18th comes close with an infinity green that looks like it just sits there, floating on the blue of the ocean. This really is a fitting cinematic finish to a wonderful golfing experience.

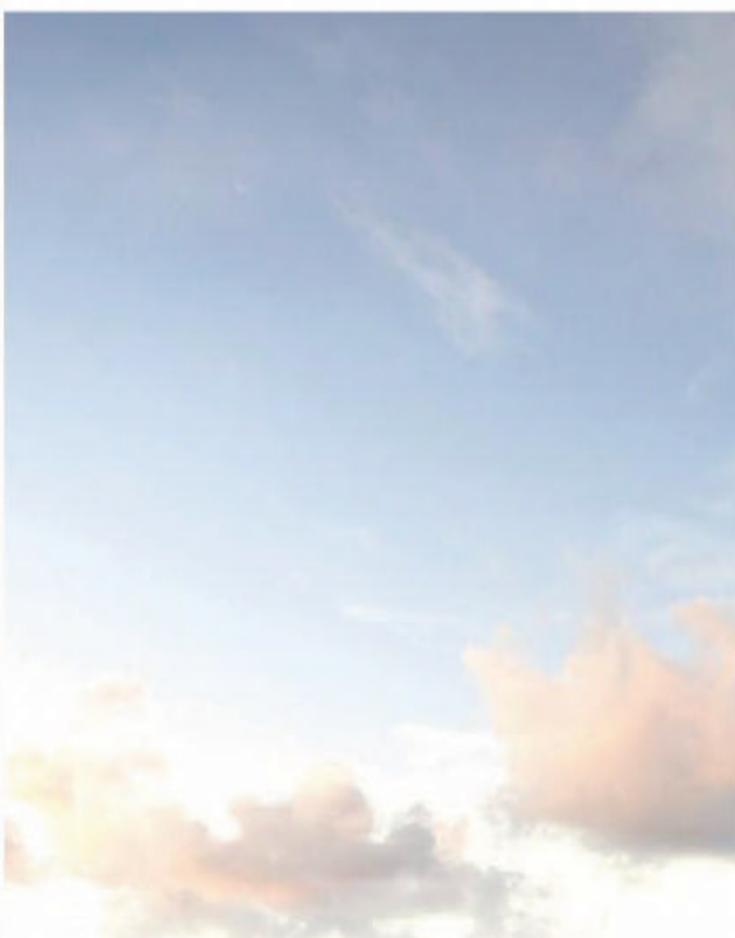


The 16th hole at St Kitts. Look at the view!



The Atlantic Ocean visible from St Kitts' 11th green

I love cycling – and what better way to see the island of Nevis than by mountain bike? In front of me is Winston Crooke, proud owner of Wheel World Cycle Shop. Soap watchers may recognise him as Beresford, a gangster from *EastEnders*, but Winston has had roles in *London's Burning* and *The Bill*, among others.



I am on an hour's tour with Winston who's taking me around some of the local historic sites and filling me in on some of the fascinating history of Nevis.

History is alive on this bike ride and if you take one, hopefully, like me, you'll discover lots of interesting details – like discarded pieces of clay by the roadside that the ships used to use as a ballast. They would empty these out and replace them with rum and sugar cane for the voyages back to the old world.

COTTLE CHURCH

My trail takes me to the remains of the crumbling Cottle Church, which was the first church in the Caribbean built for people – regardless of their colour – to worship together. We then head to Admiral Lord Nelson wife's old house



that has now been converted into the beautiful Nisbet Plantation Beach Club.

We pass old steam mills and stone windmills, each with their own pieces of history. I have to say there's no better way to see the island of Nevis.

ZIP LINING

It's my last day on St Kitts and it's an exciting one. My hands are sweating, not because of the heat but because my head and heart are rushing and thumping with a huge mix of conflicting emotions.

We pull off the main road and start our climb up the mountain. A third of the way up we stop, sign some forms and go through a safety talk. Pre-run, I'm loaded into a four-wheel drive and head further up the mountain. I bought a GoPro camera for this trip and, as I turn

it on and secure it to my helmet, I'm then hooked up and begin my journey across the canopy of the trees.

Yes, I am on a zip line. Me, who suffers more than a tad of vertigo. My heart is racing, I feel nauseous, but at the same time there's that rush of adrenaline running through my veins.

All too soon I'm on the platform for the last run of five. It has the added bonus of being undertaken in one of the island's five-minute rain storms and, as the rain trickles down my face, my smile of relief is beaming from ear to ear.

Zip lining should be an unmissable part of your trip to St Kitts and I'm not even sure the word 'awesome' is enough to describe the feeling as you hit the air coming out of the trees and shoot high above the green canopy, right.



Take a cycle tour to discover local history

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

■ British Airways

W: britishairways.com

Where to stay

■ St Kitts Marriott

W: marriott.com

T: +1 869-466-1200

■ Mount Nevis Hotel

■ W: mountnevishotel.com

T: +1 869-469-9373

Where to play

■ Royal St Kitts Golf Club

W: royalstkittsgolfclub.com

Course stats: par 71, 6,900 yards

T: +1 869-466-2700

■ Four Seasons Resort Nevis

W: fourseasons.com/nevis

Course stats: par 71, 6,766 yards

T: +1 869-469-1111

Things to do

■ Emerald Mist Spa

W: marriott.com

T: +1 869-466-8530

■ Nevis Wheel World Cycle Shop

T: +1 869-469-9682

■ Sky Safari Tours

W: skysafaristkitts.com

T: +1 869-466-4259

Where to eat

■ The Gin Trap

W: thegintrapnevis.com

T: +1 869-469-8230

■ Boozies on the Beach

W: booziesonthebeach.com

T: +1 869-466-8921

■ Marshalls Restaurant

W: marshallsdining.com

T: +1 869-466-8245

■ INFO: Admirals Cup Pro-Am

W: tinyurl.com/yxdsre78

T: +1 869 465 4040





JEWELS OF THE

Fancy a change? Egypt boasts stunning golf courses in many dream locations

Golf might not be the first thing that springs to mind when you think of Egypt, but all that could be about to change. This ancient land is home to a number of world-class courses, all of which offer the travelling golfer superb value for money. From October to February, 'winter' is largely sunny and warm, providing a perfect escape from the grey skies at home. So, if you've yet to discover Egypt's ancient wonders, start making plans to do so. Views of the pyramids from the fairways are to die for.

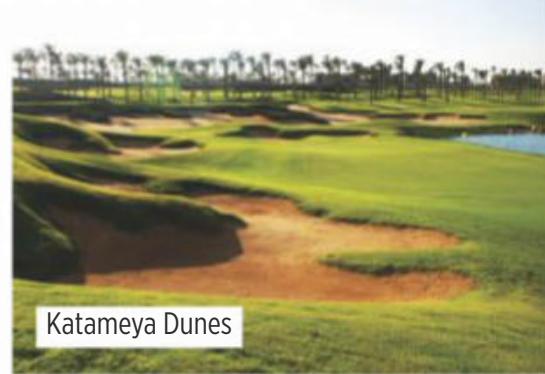
The Allegria, which opened in 2010, is a strong contender for Egypt's number one golf course. Greg Norman and his team have worked their magic in using the setting's natural lakes, streams, rock features and undulating topography to create a beautiful layout. With its large, undulating greens, and sprawling bunkers, your short game will need to be razor sharp to score well.

Elsewhere, Dreamland Golf Resort, located just a few short minutes from

the Great Pyramids, presents a wonderful challenge. Like the course, which has hosted a number of professional tournaments, its wellness centre and treatment offerings are also very special.

EXPLORING CAIRO

Off course, Cairo, chaotic as it may be, is the place to be if you enjoy desert adventures and temple exploring. Taking a cruise on the Nile is one way to experience a number of the city's many cultural highlights, while a trip to the Pyramids of Giza, one of the world's last remaining wonders, isn't to be missed.



Katameya Dunes

The hustle and bustle of the capital calls for a relaxing hideaway, which is what you can expect at Marriott Mena House – the spa of which transitions beautifully from the landscaped gardens.

With six massage suites and lavish relaxation rooms, you'll be ready for more exploring – or another 18 holes, perhaps?

Established well over a century ago, the charming Mena House is one of





El Gouna: designed by Gene Bates and Fred Couples



The Red Sea is brilliant for diving enthusiasts



See the Great Sphinx of Giza



Katameya Heights: a golfing oasis to the east of Cairo

comes at the par-5 17th, where a large fairway bunker guards the left side and water stretches out down the right.

Also on the east side of the capital, Katameya Heights Golf & Tennis Resort is another beautiful layout, thanks to designer Yves Bureau, who, in the early 1990s, helped turn a baron landscape on the outskirts of Cairo into a green, golfing oasis.

RED SEA COAST

Of course, there's always the option of investigating the coast, instead. One of Egypt's most highly regarded courses is located in Hurghada, on the Red Sea coast. It's a diver's paradise, but if you feel more at home on the fairways, The Cascades at Soma Bay should hold more appeal. When this Gary Player-design layout opened in 1998 it gave Egypt a real gem to boast of. With the five-star Sheraton Soma Bay Resort nearby, which features a world-class health club and spa, a relaxing stay is guaranteed.

Not far from here, Madinat Makadi Golf Resort is equipped to test the best players in the world, measuring over

7,500 yards from the tips. Risk versus reward will challenge your course strategy as you negotiate a series of ponds, while a more undulating back nine will test your fitness levels.

Heading north, staying on the Red Sea coastline, the ever-expanding El Gouna offers a luxurious stay among the lagoons and waterways. Such a beautiful peninsula setting makes for an equally picturesque course. Designed by Gene Bates and Fred Couples, the mountain and sea views are really quite something.

Across the Gulf of Suez, Sharm El Sheikh is a purpose-built resort on the southern coast of the Gulf of Aqaba. Its Maritim Jolie Ville Resort & Casino boasts a Thai Spa Wellness Centre where you can lose yourself for hours, while the course at Jolie Ville Golf Club offers stunning views of the Sinai Mountains and Red Sea vistas. Egypt has it all – the sun, the sea, the sights, and world-class golf destinations. Wherever you go, you can be sure there's a golf course nearby.

To kick-start your dream golfing getaway, visit www.egypt.travel



Cascades at Soma Bay



A PIONEERING APPROACH

Fergus Bisset meets Andy Johnston, general manager at Sentosa Golf Club in Singapore, to discuss sustainability



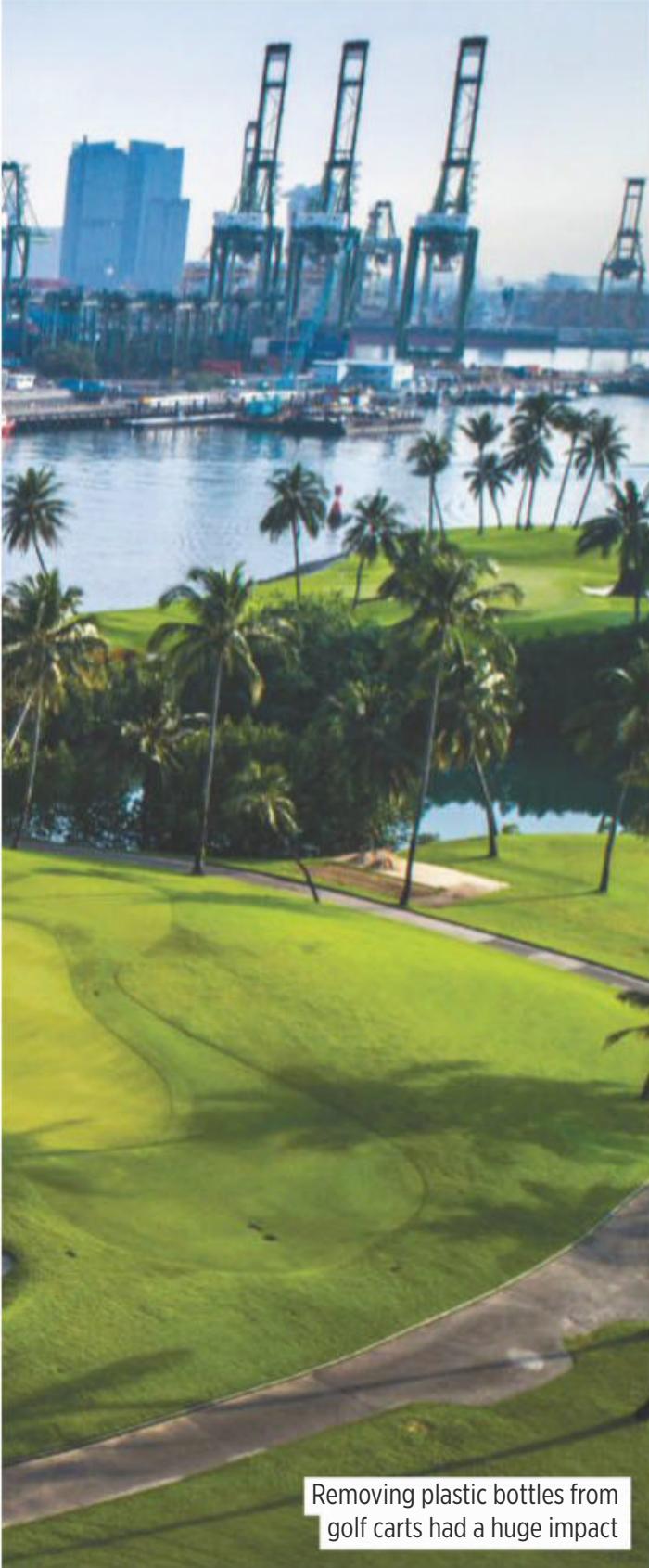
Kitchen waste is recycled as fertiliser on both courses

In a world that's increasingly aware of the impact humanity has made on the environment, golf facilities must adopt a green strategy to redress the harm done and explore all avenues of environmental sustainability.

Sentosa Golf Club in Singapore sets a benchmark in this regard. Under the guidance of their general manager Andy Johnston, Sentosa has initiated a raft of measures to ensure that the facility is as green as it can be, and there are more opportunities to explore.

Home to two fantastic championship courses – the Serapong and the New Tanjong, Sentosa GC has played host to numerous elite competitions since it was established in the mid 1970s. The club has welcomed the Singapore Open, the HSBC Women's Championship and, recently the New Tanjong course was used for the 2018 Asia Pacific Amateur Championship, organised by the Asia Pacific Golf Confederation together with The R&A and The Masters Tournament.

I spoke to Andy Johnston, an American agronomist and course-designer turned



Removing plastic bottles from golf carts had a huge impact

general manager. He explained how important tournament golf is to Sentosa.

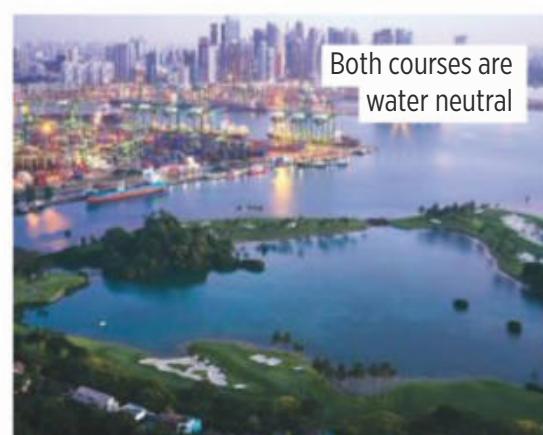
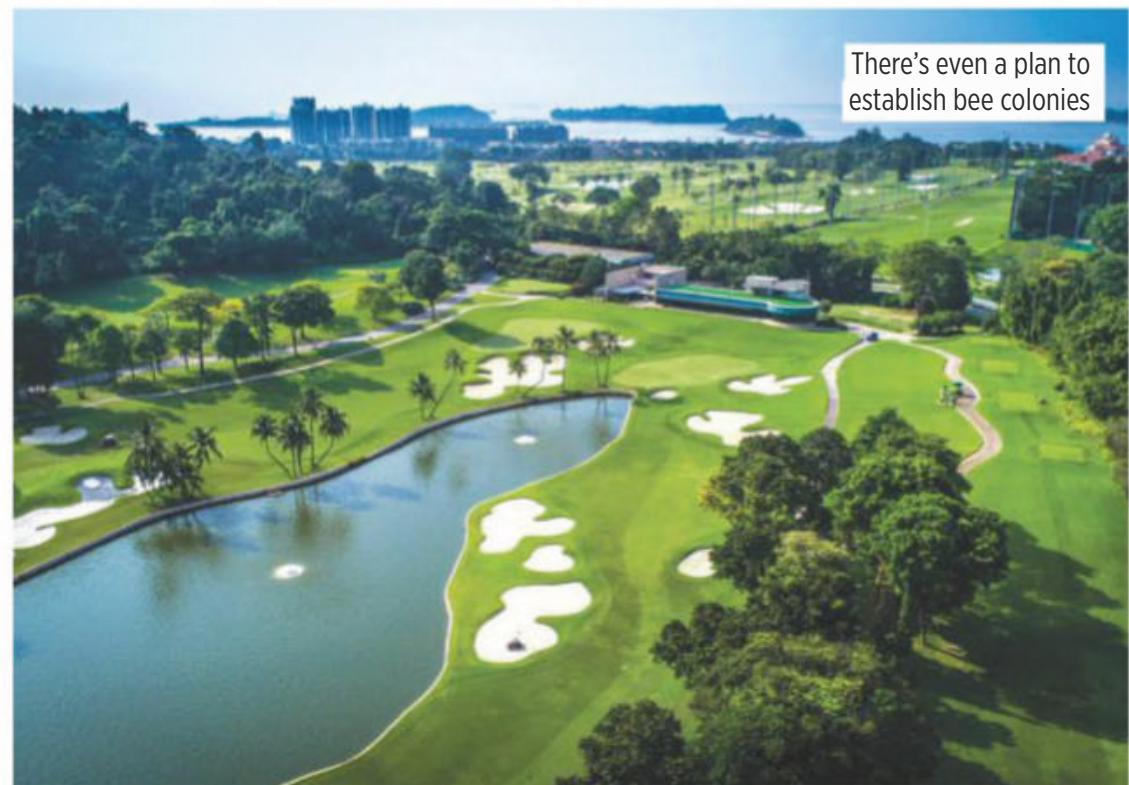
“These events set the standard for what we want to see daily at Sentosa,” he says. “We’re trying to produce courses that play to tournament conditions.”

LEADING THE WAY

But equally important to Andy and Sentosa is to achieve this level of quality and playability using environmentally sustainable techniques and technologies. The club is leading the way in establishing innovative methods to drive towards green golf facilities.

“We opened the can on this one and now realise just how much depth there is within that can,” says Johnston. “We started with plastics – simply removing plastic bottles from our golf carts. That meant 150,000 fewer plastic bottles per year. It received such great support that we realised it was just the beginning.”

The club is now looking towards biodegradable alternatives to plastics wherever possible. More energy-efficient air conditioning and water heating systems have been installed in the



clubhouse. A digester was installed, allowing kitchen and horticultural waste to be ground and used as a fertiliser on the courses. All this resulted in the Sentosa clubhouse being recognised with the BCA Green Mark Platinum award for environmental performance.

BEE COLONIES

Around the course, there has been an effort to establish and nurture trees native to Singapore and there’s a plan in place to establish bee colonies in corners of the Sentosa property.

“We’re developing the right plant life to sustain these bee colonies,” says Johnston. “We need more pollinators for our plant portfolio. Bees worldwide are down 70% so this is mega important.”

In terms of course maintenance, Sentosa is at the cutting-edge when it comes to sustainability with regard to treatments and irrigation.

“Something that flies under the radar but has made a huge difference is our use of carbon materials in our fertility programme,” he says. “By adding them in a powdered solution, they have allowed us to cut our chemical and fertiliser usage by 40%. They strengthen the grass plant to such an extent that we’ve also solved our nematode [worm] problem. We used to treat for nematodes once a week, but the carbons allow the nematode colonies to thrive without damaging the grass. In

terms of environmental sustainability, it’s one of the biggest wins we’ve had.”

EXTRA EFFICIENCY

Water usage is another area where sustainability is to the fore.

“We have no wells, so we collect all the water we use from rainfall. Even so, we’ve also made efforts to be more efficient with the water we do use,” says Johnston.

“We’ve installed single-head irrigation systems for more flexibility. I can vary it per hole, by topography – sending more water to high spots and less to lower ones. Our water usage is cut by 40%.”

And extra tech to monitor weather and soil temperature brings added benefits.

“We have five weather stations around the courses and we constantly measure soil temperatures,” he explains. “The data this provides allows us to manage airflow using portable fans to change temperatures and avoid treatments.

“Smart use of technology helps hugely with environmental sustainability and I don’t yet know how far we’ll be able to go, but I aspire to push the envelope.”

Sentosa sets a tremendous example for golf facilities around the world when it comes to a green approach. The courses are water neutral and require a minimum of chemical treatments.

Around and off the courses, the club has looked at everything from insect life to waste disposal to ensure that Sentosa is as environmentally sustainable as it can be. At Sentosa, green is the colour.

ESSENTIALS

Where to play

■ Serapong

Course stats: par 72, 7,300 yards

■ New Tanjong

Course stats: par 72, 6,218 yards

W: sentosagolf.com

A NEW WAY TO

Dormie Network offers discerning golfers a home-from-home membership experience at premium clubs across the States

Being a member of a fine golf club with a first-rate golf course and excellent facilities is a desirable thing. But what if there were a way to offer travelling golfers the same calibre of membership experience wherever they travelled, whether on business or for pleasure? Well, that's precisely what the Dormie Network in America was created for – to provide a national network of exclusive clubs that combine the experience of destination golf with the premier hospitality of private membership.

Currently Dormie Network comprises six destinations across six American states that not only offer superb golf courses but also unrivalled off-course experiences, from accommodation and

hospitality to exceptional dining. With a course designer namecheck that includes some of the biggest in the game, from Coore and Crenshaw to Palmer and Fazio, it's worth taking a look at what Dormie Network already has to offer prospective members, with the portfolio sure to grow in the years ahead...

Ballyhack Golf Club in Roanoke, Virginia opened in 2009 and is already ranked 6th in the state by a leading American golf publication. Designed by Lester George, this expansive layout nestles against the eastern slopes of the famous Blue Ridge Mountains, and features elevation changes, old-style



Victoria National, Indiana



PLAY

blow-out bunkers and accommodately wide fairways. The mountain-retreat destination offers a spacious clubhouse and on-site lodgings that combine old-world Virginia hospitality with 21st-century amenities.

Dormie Club at Pinehurst in North Carolina is one of two Coore and Crenshaw creations in the Dormie Network, along with Hidden Creek in New Jersey. There's a hint of the Scottish Highlands about the course at Dormie Club, which boasts 110ft elevation changes, three beautiful natural lakes and a cluster of reachable par 4s to encourage adventurous play. There's a fine full-service clubhouse here, with on-site cottage-style accommodation currently under construction.

Hidden Creek in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey opened in 2002. The course is a sprawling design laid out over 750 acres of southern New Jersey woodland, and has already hosted a number of



Dormie Club,
North Carolina

important USGA events including US Open qualifying in 2014 and 2018. The vast clubhouse includes a fully equipped golf shop, fine and casual dining facilities, a billiards room and a state-of-the-art fitness centre, while The Lodge provides well-appointed on-site accommodation for members and guests.

The other designer with two Dormie Network courses to his name is Tom Fazio, who created both Victoria National Golf Club in Newburgh, Indiana and Briggs Ranch Golf Club in San Antonio, Texas around the turn of the century. Victoria National is laid out over 400 acres of reclaimed mining land and serves up a dramatic golfing landscape blessed with native vegetation and deep, spring-fed lakes. As well as a full-service bar and restaurant, wine enthusiast members will particularly enjoy the Vino Club here. The club's on-site cottages include master king suites with private baths and living spaces.

Down in Texas, Briggs Ranch is a fair test for all abilities with five sets of tee boxes. The course wends its way through woodland and lakes, placing a real premium on approach play and creative strategy. There's already a fine clubhouse, well-stocked shop and restaurant and these will be complemented very soon by state-of-the-art new practice facilities and on-site cottage accommodation.

Completing Dormie Network's current sextet is the Arnold Palmer Signature Course at Arborlinks in Nebraska City.



Ballyhack, Virginia

Here, Palmer's design has the look and feel of a links, with shimmering fescues and challenging bunkering. It makes excellent use of the natural landscape and has already hit Nebraska's top ten. This is a peaceful family retreat with first-rate modern amenities and excellent on-site accommodation.

With the Dormie Network set to grow, it will surely become ever more appealing to discerning golfers craving the same high-quality golf destination experience wherever their travels take them.

ESSENTIALS

Where to play

All yardages from the back tees

Ballyhack Golf Club

Roanoke, Virginia

Course stats: par 72, 7,294 yards

Dormie Club

Pinehurst, North Carolina

Course stats: par 71, 6,883 yards

Victoria National Golf Club

Newburgh, Indiana

Course stats: par 72, 7,209 yards

Briggs Ranch Golf Club

San Antonio, Texas

Course stats: par 72, 7,247 yards

Arborlinks

Nebraska City, Nebraska

Course stats: par 72, 7,190 yards

Hidden Creek

Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey

Course stats: par 71, 7,023 yards

Dormie Network National Membership

At all levels, membership extends complete access to, and full member privileges at, every Dormie Network club. With easy access to regional, national and international airports, Dormie Network National Membership offers members a premium, pure golf retreat anywhere in the country.

W: DormieNetwork.com



PARADISE CALLING

In Mauritius, Beachcomber have luxury golf resorts and spas down to a tee



Mont Choisy Le Golf

It is places like Mauritius that make you glad to be a golfer. Even if you think you're unlikely to ever set foot on this sumptuous island, with its growing number of top year-round golf courses, it's surely reassuring to know that such places really do exist should the opportunity ever arise for you to taste true golfing paradise.

If you are exploring long-haul destinations (it's a 12-hour flight from London), there's no better time to consider this tropical haven that lies just over 1,000 miles off the south-east coast of Africa. This is because Beachcomber Hotels are now offering some enticing packages at four of their stunning resorts to give guests more choice than ever.

Two of their luxurious hotels can be found on the Le Morne Peninsula in the south-west corner of Mauritius. Paradis Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa and Dinarobin Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa are home to the superb Paradis Golf Club, where Le Morne Brabant Mountain forms the spectacular backdrop.

This stunning course takes you through fragrant bougainvillea and poinsettia before reaching more open terrain. Water doesn't so much lurk as take over, with the mesmerising lagoon flanking the fine 16th hole a great example. The closing stretch is one of the island's most testing



The heavenly setting of Paradis Golf Club

and picturesque, with five back-nine holes featuring water and doglegs.

The 286 rooms at the Paradis Hotel include luxurious sea-facing suites and 13 fantastic beachfront villas. The contemporary chic ambience of Dinarobin makes it the perfect place to unwind. Renowned for its cuisine and the most elegant spa in Mauritius, this hotel



Le Morne Brabant looks down over Paradis

is ideal for guests seeking the highest quality in leisure travel.

Residents at both resorts also enjoy reduced green fees at Heritage Golf Club at Domaine de Bel Ombre, Tamarina Golf Estate and Avalon Golf Course. Built over more undulating terrain and rising from just above the sea towards Black River Gorges National Park, the Heritage offers fantastic views all around, including those over the Valriche Nature Reserve.

Further north, the five-star Trou aux Biches Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa and the Canonnier Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa offer privileged access to the island's newest course and the only one on the north-west coast – Mont Choisy. Designed by renowned South African architect, Peter Matkovich, Mont Choisy has state-of-the-art practice facilities that make it a fantastic addition to the island's world-class golf collection. Set over a sprawling 250-acre nature reserve, the course has a lush tropical feel to it and will provide a superb challenge for golfers of all abilities.

The course is just a five-minute free shuttle ride from Trou aux Biches, a luxury hotel offering fun for all the family on one of the island's very best beaches. Canonnier, situated within a 17-acre tropical garden, is also just a short drive away, and represents a fantastic option for those seeking a good-value all-

inclusive getaway. There are three restaurants at Canonnier, along with a wide range of water activities and a unique Wellness Centre.

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

Fly Air Mauritius and begin your magical Mauritius experience as soon as you step on the plane. Direct flights to Mauritius depart from London Heathrow three times a week.



Where to play

- Paradis Golf Club
- Mont Choisy Le Golf
- Heritage Golf Club
- Tamarina Golf Estate
- Avalon Golf Course

Where to stay

- Paradis Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa
- Dinarobin Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa
- Trou aux Biches Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa
- Canonnier Beachcomber Golf Resort and Spa
- **W:** beachcombertours.uk



GOLF MONTHLY READER OFFER

■ **Book for travel** by 31 October, 2019 and save up to 25 per cent on your accommodation costs.

■ **From £1,550pp sharing:** Seven nights at Paradis sharing a Tropical Room on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis. Includes economy class flights (Air Mauritius) and private hotel transfers.

■ **From £1,335pp sharing:** Seven nights at Canonnier sharing a standard garden-facing room on an all-inclusive

basis. Includes economy class flights (Air Mauritius) and private hotel transfers.

■ Stay at Paradis, Dinarobin, Trou aux Biches or Canonnier Beachcomber Resorts between May 1 and September 30, 2019 and enjoy reduced green fees at Paradis and Mont Choisy golf courses (buggy hire required at Mont Choisy).

To book, call Beachcomber Tours on 01483 445618 or visit beachcombertours.uk



Canonnier's glorious beachfront



EASTERN TREATS

Jeremy Ellwood attends to some unfinished business in Abu Dhabi before making his Dubai golfing debut

I've been to the UAE every January with *Golf Monthly* for the past 13 years, sometimes to play a bit of golf, but also to work at the Desert Swing events.

Until 2018, these were based in Abu Dhabi, where I'd played the tournament course once, Yas Links a few times and Saadiyat Beach more frequently.

Last year, I went to Dubai for the first time, but didn't play. This year, I was asked to do both, which provided the ideal opportunity between tournaments

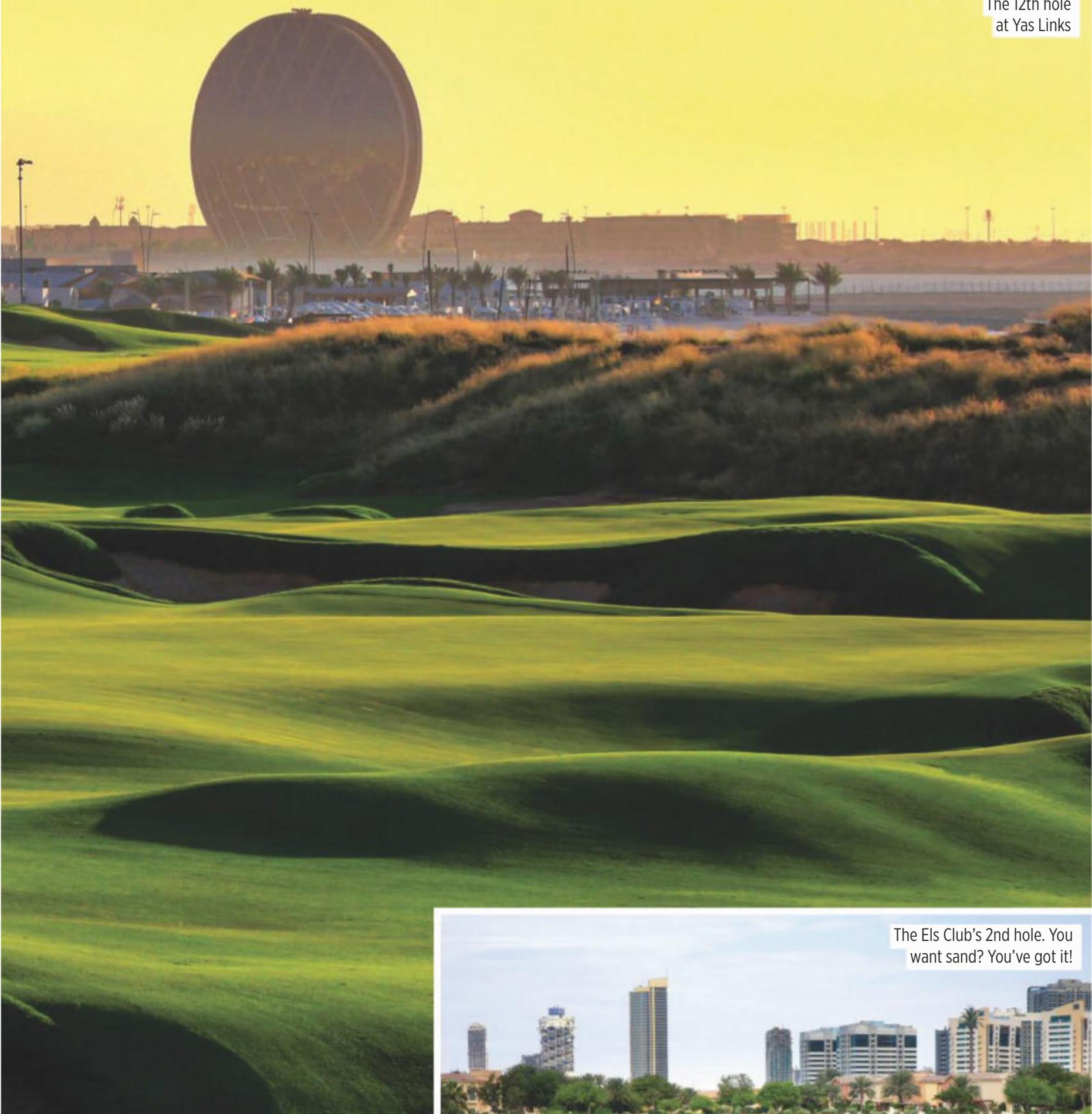
to pick off Abu Dhabi City Golf Club, the fourth and final grass course in Abu Dhabi, before making my Dubai debut at The Els Club. There was also time to play most of the brand-new Dubai Hills course, which opened last November.

The Gary Player creation at Saadiyat Beach has been open for a decade, and although the surrounding landscape has changed, the course is the same. There's sand galore, and you'll need some sort of miraculous 'A+' game to make it round without playing a single bunker shot.

An underpass after the 3rd edges you closer to the front-nine holes on the Gulf, with the long par-4 5th sweeping down towards it and the signature par-3 6th playing along the white sandy beach in front of the vast St Regis hotel.

The uphill 7th is then one of two par 4s, along with the 14th, where the greenkeepers can get mean with pin positions. If it's just over the right-hand bunker on both holes, don't go chasing it!

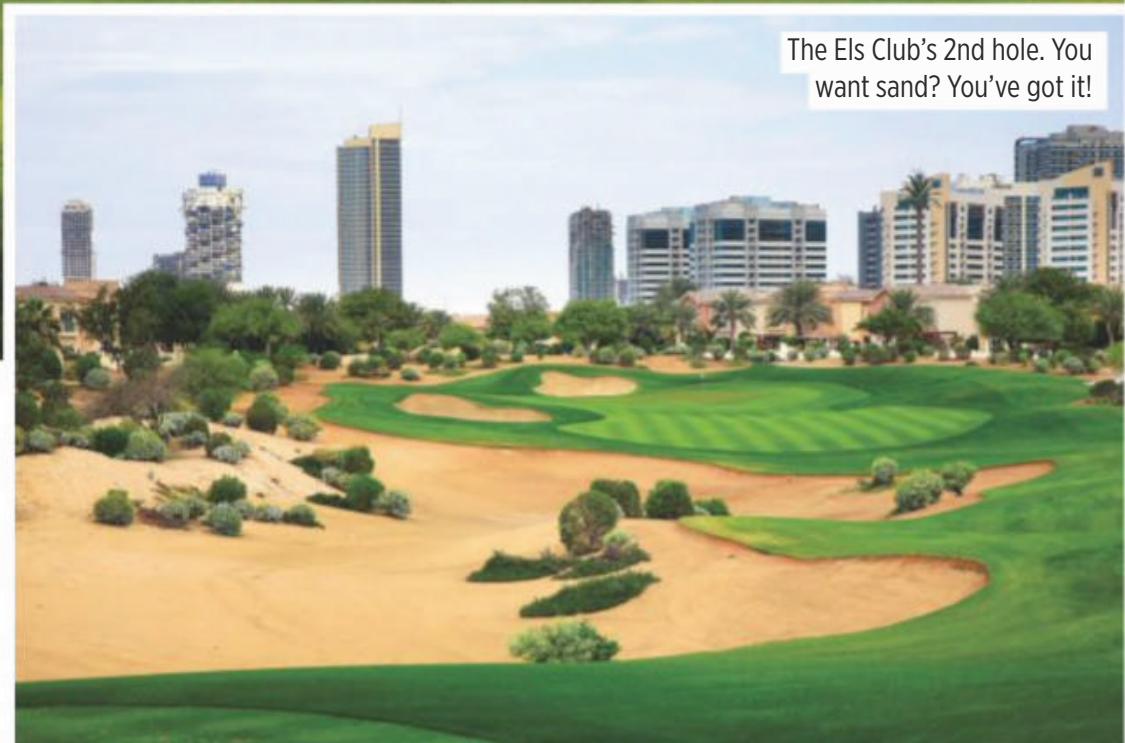
The run for home is strong, with the 16th an incredibly long par 4 simply ➤

The 12th hole
at Yas Links

littered with sand, but it's at least downhill. The final pair are a delightful short par 3 where you can ill afford to miss, and a par 4 that becomes more dangerous the more of the lake you take on. Finding the wrong part of the green will make three putts almost inevitable.

ABU DHABI CITY

And so to Abu Dhabi City Golf Club, a nine-holer laid out inside the racecourse, where it transpired that the general manager was an old acquaintance from 25 years ago. This is the oldest course in the UAE and was converted from an 18-hole sand course to a nine-hole grass one in 1998. You can also play under floodlights after dark, if you so desire.



The Els Club's 2nd hole. You want sand? You've got it!

Your heart rate will barely flicker as this tidy and well-presented layout is quite flat. But clever routing and well-placed water hazards (sorry, penalty areas) make it a thoroughly enjoyable challenge.

You access the 1st tee via an underpass that slithers beneath the racecourse, with the dead-straight opener hugging the

track all the way. The 4th is a decent short hole playing to a slightly raised green protected by three bunkers, and you then decide how much of the corner to cut off on the next while avoiding the two central bunkers. I chickened out and pulled it left, but conjured up a 5-iron to six feet for my first birdie. ➤



The 6th, a teasingly short dogleg around a placid lake, tees off from close to the grandstand, with the 7th a very pretty but dangerous par 3 playing over an extension of that water. The 8th is just a very long golf hole, making up 20 per cent of the total length at 610 yards first time round – and 20 more the second!

YAS LINKS

As on previous trips, Yas Links is still my favourite Abu Dhabi course. The greens were excellent – pure, often very big – and invariably thought-provoking. There isn't a weak hole on the back nine, but plenty to admire before that right from the prudently generous opener.

Another generous drive comes on the par-5 7th, where you play downhill before heading up and over a crest to a green which has the Yas Marina Grand Prix Circuit as its backdrop. The 8th is a great par 3 – not too long, but with water tight right all the way – and even if you're not playing off the backs, venture back on the 9th as it's a much more exciting drive over the corner of the tranquil lagoon.

As for the back nine, the 10th, 11th, 12th and 15th are all good holes in this figure-of-eight routing, but the others have the added drama of adjacent water, starting with the lovely par-3 13th and the classic risk-reward 14th.

There's water tight-right here all the way to a very long green, with lots going on around it to potentially foil your birdie intentions. The dramatic closing stretch from 16 hugs the water left all the way home – very tightly indeed by the 16th green – with another split fairway to factor in on the long par-5 finale.

The Els Club, where I hit my first golf shot in anger in Dubai, opened in 2007 and is a quite magnificent and visually inspiring layout in pristine condition.

The opener is flanked by a big sandy waste area on the right and a number of big bunkers on the left, with large bunkers then obscuring part of the fairway off the tee on the dogleg 3rd.

The second short hole at the 4th is an absolute cracker, with its shallow amphitheatre green protected by four big bunkers and a vast sandy waste horseshoe. The 7th and 15th stand out, too – playing either side of a huge lake, which preys on the mind of hookers heading out before giving slicers something to think about coming home.

THE LION'S DEN

The stretch from the 9th to the 11th is known as the Lion's Den on account of its difficulty, and it lived up to its name as I had to work monumentally hard just to bogey the long par-4 9th, then won the 10th with a seven! The good holes continue apace coming home, with two more great par 3s in the 11th and 17th and the memorable 12th, where you turn the corner to enjoy a splendid view of the awesome Dubai city skyline.

For my final outing, I squeezed in 12 holes at Dubai Hills before the light defeated me. Dubai's newest golf operation boasts amazing practice facilities and an impressive clubhouse, plus a course where much sand has been moved to create a far more undulating layout than most in these parts.

The 1st is another sensibly generous opener, while the 2nd is testament to all that sand moving – a lovely par 3 across a wide gully towards an amazing modern

house on the skyline. The next hole plays across another sandy gully and is a clever risk-reward par 4 with a semi-dogleg route, then a more direct route straight at the green, certainly off the forward tees.

The par 5 that follows has that killer city backdrop with the Burj Khalifa – the world's tallest building. Two excellent holes close out the front nine, a big par 5 that shimmies this way and that past a big lake on the right, then a daunting par 3 that's all carry over water off the backs. I opted for the blues at 202 yards, but a strong wind meant I duly paid the price.

I managed three more on the back nine before bad light stopped play – a couple of eminently playable holes then a more demanding par 4 in the 12th – and I briefly reached the 13th, an excellent-looking par 3. First stop next time will be to complete the course here, before broadening my Dubai CV further.

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

Emirates (emirates.com) flies direct to Dubai from Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Also, Etihad (Etihad.com) flies direct to Abu Dhabi from Heathrow, Manchester and Dublin.

Where to play

■ Saadiyat Beach, Abu Dhabi

Course stats: par 72, 6,733 yards

■ Yas Links, Abu Dhabi

Course stats: par 72, 6,611 yards

■ Abu Dhabi City, Abu Dhabi

Course stats: par 70, 6,307 yards

■ The Els Club, Dubai

Course stats: par 72, 6,829 yards

■ Dubai Hills, Dubai

Course stats: par 72, 6,785 yards

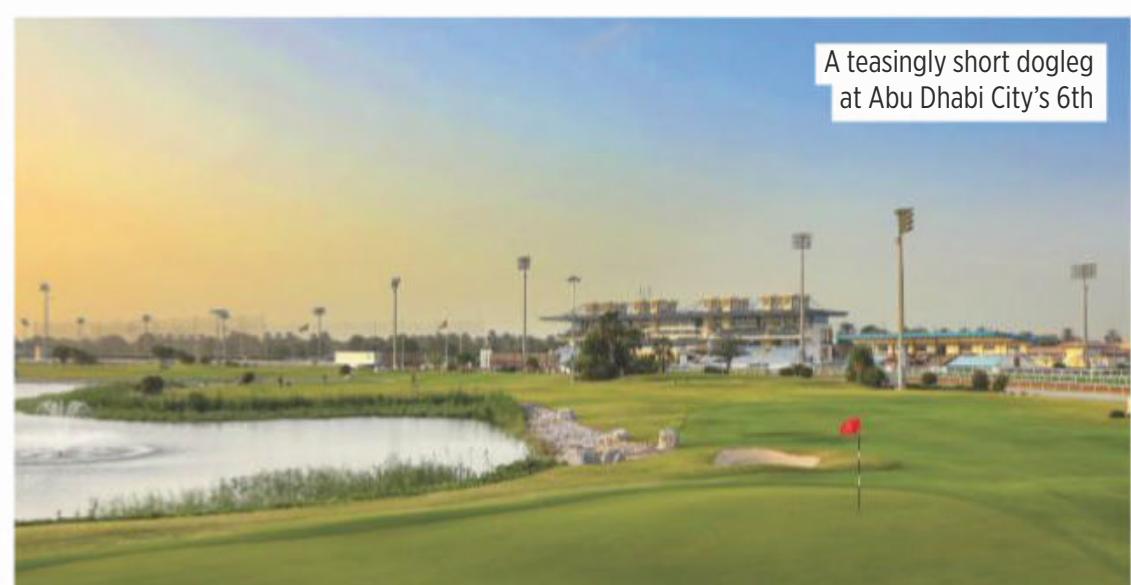
Where to stay

■ Yas Island Rotana, Abu Dhabi

W: rotana.com/centrohotels

■ Novotel Dubai Al Barsha, Dubai

W: novotel.accorhotels.com



A teasingly short dogleg at Abu Dhabi City's 6th



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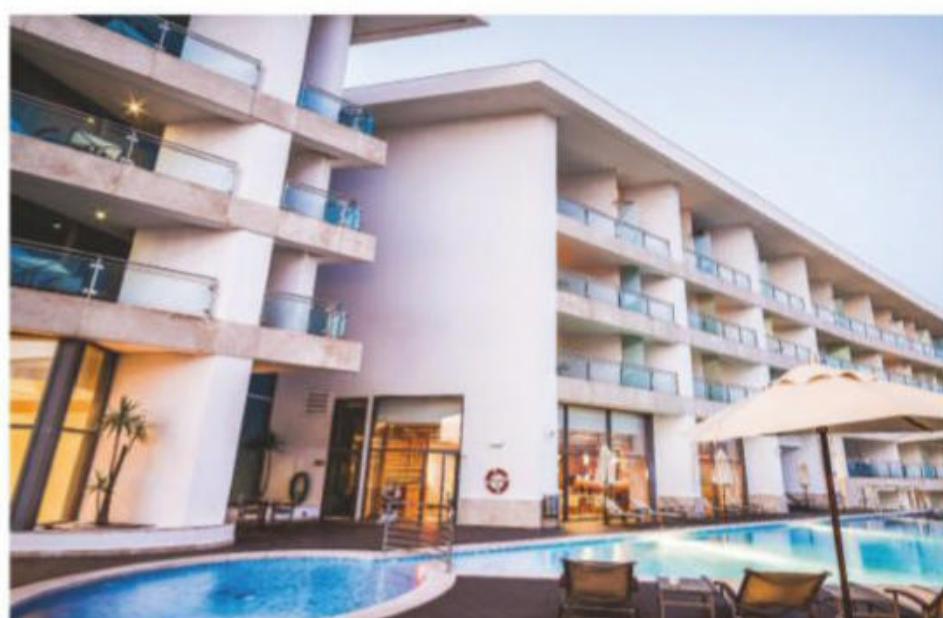
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THE GULF'S BEST-KEPT SECRET



Michael Weston discovers a hidden golfing treasure at Al Mouj in Oman

Sandwiched between the Gulf of Oman and the Hajar Mountains lies the 'Middle East's best-kept secret'. You won't find any swanky skyscrapers here, like those dominating the skyline in many of its extravagant neighbours. Muscat, Oman's understated capital, offers tourists an altogether different experience, but with its magnificent mosques, golden sands and mesmerising views, it won't remain a secret much longer. Travelling golfers are spreading the word, too, for Al Mouj Golf is one of the very best courses in the Middle East.

Greg Norman's layout, home of the European Tour's Oman Open, lies at the heart of a luxury leisure and residential complex, with the course beautifully positioned along a stunning stretch of coastline. It's tough – any tour player will tell you that – and when the ocean breeze picks up, it's probably the most difficult course on the 'desert swing'. But for its 300 members, it's paradise. Likewise for visiting golfers, as nowhere is 'millionaire's golf' more spectacular.

Steep humps and mounds line the fairways over the first few holes, but it's

the bunkering that represents the biggest challenge, for Norman's large, deep sand traps are a constant feature. At the par-5 3rd, for example, the green is surrounded by traps that will punish anything but the near-perfect approach. This is often the case – merely good shots won't always cut it, especially as the slick, sloping greens have severe run-off areas.

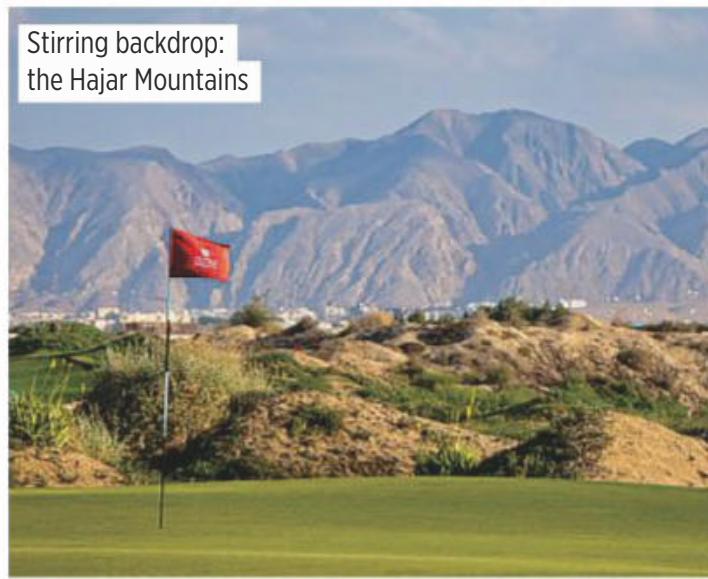
Into the middle of the front nine, and holes 4, 5 and 6 play alongside and over a large lake. The island green on the par-3 5th can look quite small when the wind is up, making good club selection crucial to avoid a visit to the kind of drop zone even tour pros wouldn't much fancy under pressure.

RIGHT BY THE SHORE

Then come the sea views. The par-5 7th hugs the shore, as does the 9th, a long par 4 where the tee box sits just yards from the beach. Up ahead, deep bunkers await, along with a treacherous green, all of which makes par a very good result as you head into the back nine.

The par 3s at 11 and 13 both feature beautiful ocean backdrops; both make a strong case for 'most memorable hole',

Stirring backdrop:
the Hajar Mountains



although Al Mouj has many – and they keep coming. These stunning short holes are separated by the par-5 12th, which plays along the coastline. Stray a fraction too far left over the rocks and your ball will end up on the beach.

Water comes into play again on the par-4 15th, which makes for a tough drive, before the finishing stretch looms into view. You just know the coastline will have one final say, and it's there on the right all the way down 18. If you choose to play from the tips, you'll face a carry over a section of beach, before Norman asks one last question with a huge green that's heavily protected by bunkers.

"Al Mouj is a must-play if you're ever in Oman," says Eddie Pepperell. "I'd say it's



Greg Norman designed highly acclaimed Al Mouj

the best course I've played in the Middle East." Golf course superintendent Steve Johnson may be biased, but he's also been wowed by Norman's masterpiece. "I've been fortunate enough to work at some very, very good golf courses, and the way the golf course is now, this is up there," says Johnson, whose 25 years in the industry have included stints at Gleneagles, Sandy Lane in Barbados and Port Royal in Bermuda.

It's an impressive layout, and not just from a course design perspective. Winner of the 2019 IAGTO Sustainability Award for Community Value, Al Mouj is regarded as a thought-leader in eco-friendly golf



course practices. Conservation, resource efficiency and community engagement lie firmly at the heart of everything here, for which Johnson and his team deserve enormous credit.

LOCAL CULTURE

Away from the course it's very easy to fill your days. From the sumptuous Kempinski hotel – absolute heaven for breakfast lovers – the marina is just a short walk away. In a little over half an hour, you can be dolphin watching and snorkelling with turtles around the breathtaking UNESCO-protected Daymaniyat Islands. A guided tour is thoroughly recommended; it's the best way to explore the city's many castles, forts and museums, as well as the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, a marvel of Arabian architecture.

No trip to Oman would be complete without a trip to the Wahiba Sands, a four-hour drive from the capital but certainly worth the effort. Watch a golden sunset before setting up camp for a night's stargazing in the desert.

European Tour pros rave about the Al Mouj layout

A tour of the mountains is another eye-opening experience. Villages such as Balad Sayt are not exactly tourist hotspots – part of the appeal – but rather fascinating short stops where you can gain an understanding of what mountain life is like for Omanis. Should your guide take you for refreshments at Misfah Old House, sample the local coffee and dig into your pockets for a few rial in exchange for a pot of delicious local honey. Back on the road and the adventure continues; there's always more to see and do in Oman – and a warm welcome is extended wherever you go.

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

Oman Air (omanair.com) operates daily flights from Heathrow to Muscat, which take around seven hours. Manchester also serves Oman's capital. Once there, navigating the new \$1.8 billion passenger terminal is gloriously stress-free. Tourist visas cost around £10 and you can apply for them online via various agencies.

Where to play

■ Al Mouj Golf

W: almoujgolf.com

■ Muscat Hills Golf & Country Club

W: muscathills.ecommune.com

■ Ghala Golf Club

W: ghalagolf.com

Where to stay

■ Kempinski Hotel Muscat

W: kempinski.com

■ Mysk by Shaza

W: myskhotels.com

Visit oldmuscattourism.com to plan your perfect sightseeing tour.



Several holes hug the coastline

LOOKING OVER JORDAN

Rob Smith heads to the Middle

**East to find great golf, amazing
scenery and a whole lot more**





The 4th plays directly towards the Red Sea

T

he middle-eastern country of Jordan, and particularly historic Petra, have long been on my to-visit list. I was delighted to escape the British winter for a few days and experience all that's on offer at Ayla, including the country's first 18-hole grass golf course.

It's almost entirely landlocked with the only maritime access at the extreme southern end on the Red Sea, at Aqaba. I flew to the King Hussein Airport which is just minutes from the city, though many people choose to arrive via Amman, the nation's capital.

This is around 200 miles to the north and offers the opportunity to visit the Dead Sea before heading down to Aqaba through the beautiful mountains, stopping off at Petra and the other-worldly landscape of Wadi Rum.

FIVE-STAR LUXURY

The small, southern city of Aqaba runs from the water's edge up into the foothills of the mountains, and sandwiched between it and the border with Israel is Ayla, pronounced 'eye-la'.

This is a brand-new, tasteful, large-scale project designed to show off all that's great about the region. It includes housing, a marina, and very happily, a beautiful new Greg Norman golf course.

I was lucky enough to be one of the first guests to stay at the Hyatt Regency, a spacious and stylish five-star hotel that's right on the marina, and just a two-minute drive from the golf.

Everyone is friendly and I recommend the Olive Tree with its ever-changing menu of Mediterranean dishes such as traditional mezze and kebabs.

GOLFING OASIS

I've rarely played anywhere in better condition than the very enjoyable Championship Course at Ayla. With wow-factor mountain views on either side and the Red Sea glimmering to the south, it's as suited to holiday golf as it is to a serious tournament.

In April this year, Ayla hosted the inaugural Jordan Mixed Open, an innovative event that brought together leading golfers from the European Challenge Tour, the Ladies European Tour and the Staysure Tour. They all competed for the same prizes, the only concession being that the ladies and seniors played from more forward tees.

At present, the club is operating out of the swish Academy clubhouse. It's also home to Silica – an all-day restaurant that serves delicious and generous local and international dishes.

Ayla's par-72 course stretches to 7,152 yards, but there are four alternatives so everyone can find the appropriate ➤



The Championship course has serious 'wow' factor

length for their game. The first three holes ease you into your round before an excellent par 4 with a raised green that plays directly down towards the Red Sea. Scary tee shots come at the 6th, a lovely par 3 over a lake, and the 7th, a dogleg to the left that begs you to take on the watery carry.

The 8th is a strong par 4 and the front nine closes with a super par 5 back up the valley with a water hazard all the way on the left. The 11th might just be the best hole on the course, a cracking par 4 with a creek short of the green and an imperious mountain backdrop.

Big hitters will fancy their chances at 14 and 15, back-to-back shortish par 4s, and the final par 3 that follows is lovely.

The round finishes with a terrific par 4, 465 yards from the back tee requiring a big drive, with eye-catching bunkering and water on the right all the way.

I also really enjoyed the nine-hole par-3 Academy Course. So much so, in fact, that I played it on three different evenings under floodlights. It's kept in the same pristine order as the Championship course, and the holes range from pitching wedge to hybrid, with beautiful bunkering and large inviting greens.

AMAZING TREASURES

Anyone visiting Ayla should take time to visit two of Jordan's other highlights. I had heard about Petra, but hadn't been prepared for just how different and expansive it is. Stopping off for some mountain views along the way, it took us a couple of hours to get there from Aqaba.

The journey is quite interesting, but Petra really is something else. One of the New7Wonders of the World, you could spend all day admiring its rock carvings and amazing archaeological treasures. *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* was filmed at Petra, whereas various *Star Wars* episodes, *The Martian* and many others have all used Wadi Rum. Also known as Valley of the Moon and a similar distance from Ayla, this is a seemingly endless landscape with huge

rocky hills and outcrops as well as staggering sunsets. While there, I very much enjoyed my encounter with 'Zarb' – a delicious Bedouin barbecue that's cooked in a sand-covered pit.

While Jordan has rightly attracted history buffs for years, the fabulous new course and hotel at Aqaba are sure to appeal to a much wider audience and make Ayla one of the golfing and cultural destinations of the future. I'd happily go back and recommend it to anyone heartily.

ESSENTIALS

How to get there

Fly directly from Gatwick to Aqaba with easyJet (easyjet.com), but as Jordan is increasing in popularity, flight access changes quickly, so it's best to check. Flight time from London is five and a half hours.

Where to play

■ **Ayla Golf Club, Aqaba**

Championship course: par 72, 7,152 yards

Academy course: par 27, 1,085 yards

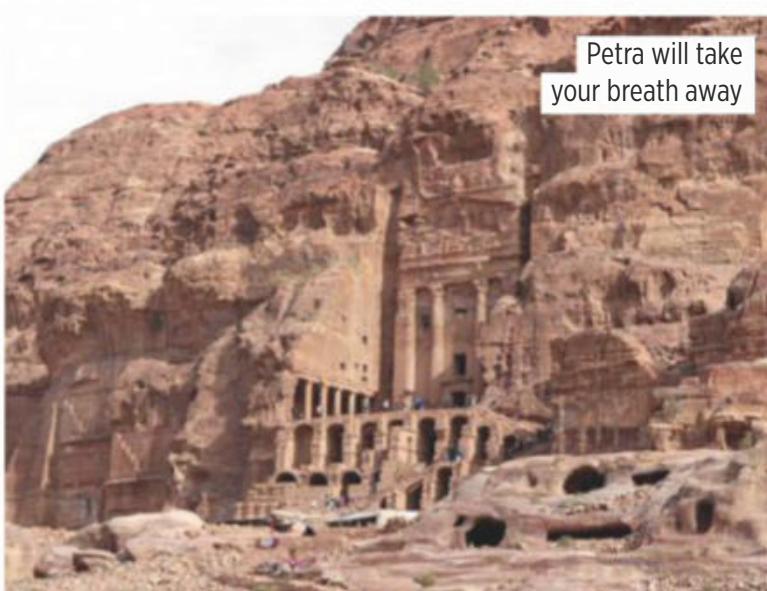
W: ayla.com.jo

Where to stay

■ **Hyatt Regency, Aqaba**

W: hyatt.com

For more information on everything this region has to offer, visit aqaba.jo



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